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HE WAS WALKING BACKWARD, COVERING HIS OWN BODY WITH THAT OF THE MAIDEN AGAINST THE DEADLY WIZARD RIFLE.

Highland Harry, THE WIZARD RIFLEMAN;

OR,

Tough Times at Teton Basin.

BY OLL COOMES,

AUTHOR OF "WHIP KING JOE," "BABY SAM,"
"STONEWALL BOB," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A WONDERFUL SHOT.

SOUTHWARD, along the eastern shore of the Gallatin River, two men were riding at leisurely pace, discussing such subjects as their surroundings would naturally suggest.

The elder of the two was a man of nearly three-score years. He was a little under the medium in size; his face was covered with a short, stubby beard of a grizzly-gray color. His keen gray eyes looked out from under shaggy brows, sparkling with a light that was indicative of good-humor, while his rather prominent nose and square-set jaws were equally as strong evidence of true Roman courage and tenacity of purpose. He was dressed in the garb of a mountaineer, armed with a carbine and pair of pistols and mounted upon an ancient-looking cayuse that was caparisoned with a rope bridle and a goat-skin saddle, minus stirrups.

Altogether, Bildad Durr, or Uncle Bildad, as he was better known all up and down the Gallatin, was not, at first sight, a very prepossessing man, but, upon the slightest acquaintance, the rough exterior was lost sight of in the man's good-nature and genial ways, his odd and whimsical talk, and, withal, the staying qualities of a true friend.

Uncle Bildad's companion was his very opposite, in appearance at least. He was not over fifty years of age, although his beard—worn full—was almost white, giving him a rather venerable look. He was tall, well-built in figure, with a dark-blue eye, a broad, high forehead, and an air of dignity about him that betokened both refinement and intellectuality. That he was not a man of the border was evident from his dress, although he carried a pair of revolvers hung at the pommel of his saddle, and a carbine slung at his back. To Uncle Bildad he gave the name of David Hanover.

The two men were bound for the little settlement of Red Bar, the home of Uncle Bildad.

By chance they had met a few days previous, at one of the Gallatin settlements, lower down the river, and when Hanover learned that Uncle Bildad was starting for Red Bar he asked to accompany him; and thus we find them, toward the close of the third day of their journey, approaching the Bar.

During their three days sojourn Uncle Bildad had learned that David Hanover was from Michigan, and that he was in the valley of the Gallatin looking for investments. But Uncle was somewhat of a judge of human character, and while he appeared to believe all the courtly and interesting gentleman told him, he half-mistrusted there was something back of it all, carefully concealed.

The sun stood above the western mountain-peaks when the two came in sight of the Bar, on the opposite side of the river.

"Thar she looms, David!" exclaimed Bildad, with a wave of his hand in the direction of the village.

"Quite a respectable little settlement, I should say," responded Hanover, gazing steadily for some moments at the little cluster of houses and the outlying horse and cattle corrals.

"Thirteen dwellin's," replied Uncle, with an air of pride, "besides the corrals, stables, and so forth. We've a grocery, post-office and tavern with bar embellishments, all into one. We've also got a house which we use as church, school-house and committy room. I've the honor o' being the fu'st man to 'rect a cabin in Red Bar."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Hanover.

"Yes; I located there to hunt and trap, but afore I got to work, 'long comes Joshua King and two others and bought out my 'locate,' and started a hoss-ranch, and hired me to do duty as a scout, and help 'em with the stock. Then, others kept a-comin' and a-comin' till you see Red Bar as she is. Every man, woman and kid thar's made o' the proper stuff for a frontier settl'mint. And we've got some men that's away up, David, away up. For instance, there's Cap'n Kit Dalton, who's a gentleman and

a scholar that we'll buck 'g'inst any book machine in the land; and then, thar's Judge Zelotes Kinny that's handled law in Ellenoise, and who's represented four dif'rent political parties inside o' two years, and thar be'n't any o' 'em can beat *that* record! Oh! the judge is a bu'ster on law, gospel, politics and human liberty! Shades o' Cicero! you ought to hear *him* orate! I tell you, David, he stacks away up on the orate. Why, it's a fact, last Fourth o' July he orated for Red Bar, and so heavenly did he sail the old Bird o' Freedom that, it's an actual fact, David, darn my liver if it ain't! the eagles from all over come and settled down on the bluffs, and in the tree-tops, and listened with quiverin' outspread wings to the judge glorify their ancestors and Bunker Hill!"

"Of course, there are women in your village?" observed Hanover with a smile at the old man's extravagant language.

"Women? Well, I should chant! There's the judge's wife and two darters, and Cap Dalton's screamin' pretty gal, Mary; and then there's Bill Boyne's—Old Stony we call him—there's his gal, Kitty, the divinest, loveliest little heifer that ever dimpled this valley with a foot. To see her is to get all broke up about the gizzard. Old as I am, David, I went around like an old asthmatic fool, half-smothered for two months after I fu'st met Kitty Boyne. But, I got over it, David, and am just as sound and well as I ever war, ho! ho! ho!"

"Well, I hope I shall see Miss Kitty before I leave Red Bar," said Hanover; "but, are you folks not exposed to great dangers here, Uncle?"

"So fur we've had no trouble 'cept from the gol-swizzled outlaws, both red and white, a-stealin' our hosses and some cattle. You see, Cap Dalton's breedin' some lashin' fine hosses and they're a terrible temptation to the thieves. Our cattle they run into the hills and butcher, and lug off the choicest parts to their dens and leave the rest to the wolves. Red Bar's lost a thousand dollars' wuth o' hosses in the past two years, and not a single hoof o' them has been re-kivered. And the outlaws o' Teton Basin are at the bottom o' all o' it."

"I should think the stockmen of the Gallatin and other valleys would organize and hunt that gang down," said Hanover.

"They are organized," replied Uncle Bildad, "but the joke o' it is, the outlaws are *better* organized. Moreover, they have spies and confederates in every village, ranch, and settlement in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming 'cept Red Bar. Ther' don't no suspicious chumps hang 'round Red Bar long. Right in the center o' the village the Vigilantes planted two tall posts. A cross-beam rests on top, and a rope with a hangman's noose ever swings in the wind as a warnin' to "suspects." The last one that war there war one Henry Seguin—"

"Henry Seguin?" interrupted Hanover.

"Yes—know 'im?"

"I've heard of him," answered Hanover; "I think it was back at Gallatin City."

"He's a sort o' a dandy vagabond," Uncle Bildad went on; "rather good-lookin' and military-like, but he dresses too nice, and cavorts around too much for an honest Red-Barite. He come here several times stoppin' with Old Stony, whose darter Kitty he was broke up on. But Kitty didn't like him like she did Highland Harry, and one night we held a meetin' to consider his case, and it war decided to wait on him the next time he came a-courtin', but he never came back."

"But for all your vigilance your horses are stolen?"

"Yes, sir, it's a provokin' fact. It seems as impossible to break up Jack Hart's gang o' outlaws as to bu'st up the dominion o' Satan. Hidden away 'mong the unexplored recesses o' the mountains 'round and about the Three Tetons, it has been impossible for hunter or scout to penetrate to their retreat. I know three good mountaineers that started out to find Hart's rendezvous and have never been heard of since. To-night our folks meet to raise money to go into a general pot, bein' made up by Red Bar and the two lower settlements, to be offered as a reward to the man or men that'll find a route by which Jack Hart's stronghold can be reached and demolished."

"Isn't there talk now of Indian uprisings, also?" asked Hanover.

"Yes," replied Bildad, "and there's no doubt but the Ingins south o' the Yallerstone Park are on the war-path, but I don't think they'll reach us. It's the Crows we've got to fear if they break loose, and it's rumored they are gittin' awful restless. Red Bar has Highland Harry, the young Wizard Rifleman, out watchin' for her, and thar isn't a better, braver, nor

shrewder boy this side o' his birthday than that same young scout."

"I've heard wonderful stories down the Gallatin about that boy's skill with a rifle," Mr. Hanover observed.

"He's a perfect *phenomenon* with a gun, David," the old man declared. "If I'd tell you what I've see'd him do in the way o' shootin', you'd swear by your beard that I was a wall-eyed fibber. But, it's a fact, he is a Wizard Rifleman, and—"

"Uncle Bildad," interrupted Hanover, looking across the Gallatin, "isn't that a woman on horseback coming down the river?"

"Yes, it is," replied Bildad, glancing over the stream; "it are that confounded pretty little Kitty Boyne on her dashin' black pony, Bob! She can ride like a feather on the wind. Dash it! I wish we could cross the stream here and meet her. I'll bet you'd swear she was a poem in flesh and blood."

The two men were following an old wagon-trail that wound along the river through a dense growth of hemlock timber. They could see out across the stream and along the opposite shore for a mile or two above and below, and yet they could not be seen.

They watched the maiden as she galloped along the shore, and as she neared a point where a sharp spur of the bluff put abruptly out close upon the river-bank, David Hanover, whose eagle eyes seemed to take in everything, suddenly exclaimed:

"Uncle Bildad, what's that creeping out from behind that wooded bluff before the maiden?"

For a moment the old mountaineer surveyed the object closely, then, with a start, exclaimed:

"It's an Ingin, as sure as there's a soul in my body! and the red devil is waylayin' the gal!"

"Can we not warn her of her danger by shouting?"

"Never, David!" replied the old man, "for—there! *see!* the infernal varlet has already headed her off and seized her pony's reins!"

"My God! can we do nothing?" cried Hanover, excitedly.

Skipping from his animal's back, Uncle Bildad unslung his carbine, saying:

"David, I'm goin' to shoot!"

"Man, you might kill the girl!"

"Better she be dead than in that red demon's power, alive—Ah! there goes a second red-skin to his assistance! David, Kitty Boyne is lost!"

True enough, a second savage had darted from cover and was hastening to the assistance of his friend, who, between the plunging of the spirited pony and the stinging blows of the plucky girl's riding-whip, had his hands full. But, just as this second red-skin reached his friend's side, the sharp, stunning report of a heavy-calibered rifle rung out within twenty paces of Uncle Bildad and David Hanover, and the next moment the Indian was seen to stagger back, throw up his arms and fall to the earth.

A cloud of white smoke rising above a clump of bushes located the concealment of the deadly rifleman, and advancing toward that spot, Uncle Bildad fairly shouted, as he caught sight of a boyish face among the bushes:

"By the shades o' the temple! it is Highland Harry, the Boy Death-Shot—Wizard Rifleman!"

CHAPTER II.

A DOUBLE MYSTERY.

AS David Hanover dismounted from his horse and followed Uncle Bildad to the clump of bushes on the river-bank, he saw a tall, slender youth of eighteen or twenty years, standing, rifle in hand, his hat pushed back from his brow, and his keen dark eyes fixed upon the savage and maiden on the opposite side of the river, fully four hundred yards away.

The youth was clad in a complete suit of buckskin. His face, though flushed with excitement, was not what David Hanover had expected to see in Highland Harry. While somewhat boyish, it was not effeminate, but every feature clear-cut and almost rugged in its outlines. But not until the young mountaineer had turned his head and given them a quick glance did the stranger realize that the Wizard Rifleman was more than an ordinary youth. In that single glance of his magnificent dark eyes he caught the glimpse of a heroic young spirit, and the light of a dauntless heart, that awakened a profound admiration in his breast.

But, before either of them could speak to him, he said, fixing his gaze again upon the savage and the maiden:

"Excuse me, Uncle Bildad, for a moment."

"To be sure, Harry," replied Bildad; "and oh! if you could only git in another o' your Billy Tell shots on that t'other red demon—Ah! hold, Death-Pop! you'll kill the gal!"

"Don't shoot, young man! For God's sake, don't shoot!" added Hanover, excitedly; "you'll slay that girl!"

These excited commands and appeals to the young mountaineer were occasioned by the situation across the river. The savage had succeeded in dragging Kitty Boyne from her saddle, and was holding her struggling form between himself and the point whence had come the shot that slew his friend; and in this way he was walking backward toward the bluffs, covering his own body with that of the maiden against the shot of that deadly Wizard Rifle!

Highland Harry saw that the Indian with his captive would soon be out of danger behind the bluff, and yet he involuntarily lowered his rifle when the two men shouted to him.

"She will be better off dead than in that fiend's power alive," quickly responded the boy, and again raising his rifle he glanced along the barrel and fired.

A groan burst from Uncle Bildad's lips, and he turned away like one sick at heart as he saw the savage stagger and with his burden fall to the earth.

"Boy, your luck is gone!" he sighed; "you have slain Kitty!"

"Yes, murdered her!" exclaimed Hanover, in a bitter, excited tone, that sent a pang to Harry's sensitive soul.

The young rifleman, however, made no response. He stood with his eyes on the spot where the savage and Kitty had fallen, and when he saw that neither rose to his or her feet, nor even stirred, his fine face grew pale, a deep-drawn sigh escaped his lips, and then the words of Hanover cut anew into his very soul like poisoned barbs.

There was a minute of painful silence, which was finally broken by Uncle Bildad saying:

"Harry, I'm awful sorry for you and poor Kitty!"

"There was little excuse for firing that shot!" added Hanover, in that same bitter tone.

Highland Harry made no reply to the stranger. While he felt that no crime had been committed willfully, if indeed at all, he thought he could afford to take the stranger's insults, at that time. He knew they had been spoken under the impulse of the moment, and that forbearance on his part might react upon the stranger.

"I have a canoe up the river aways," the youth said, calmly, "and I will get it and cross over and know the worst."

"David, let's gallop up to the ford, cross the crick, and investigate the matter for ourselves," suggested Bildad.

To this proposition Hanover assented, and mounting their horses they rode away at a gallop.

By this time the sun was down, and as darkness soon comes on in the mountain valleys after sunset, but little time was left for the three men to make their investigations.

Highland Harry succeeded in getting across the river and reaching the scene of the maiden's capture just as Bildad and Hanover came up. But never were men more astonished, dumfounded than those three. Neither of the red-skins' bodies, nor that of Kitty Boyne, dead or alive, was to be found!

But an examination of the place disclosed a pool of blood on the stony ground where the first savage had fallen; and, a little distance from that, and right about where the second one with the girl had met his fate, was another and larger pool of blood. That both red-skins had been shot there was not a doubt, but the fate of Kitty Boyne was a mystery.

Hanover still adhered to the belief that she had been killed; Harry had nothing to say; while Uncle Bildad had so far changed his opinion that he thought there was one chance in a hundred that she had escaped the bullet of the Wizard Rifleman.

Harry and Bildad searched the ground over carefully between the river and the bluff, but by this time it had grown so dark that no trace whatever of the bodies could be found.

"Well, I'm satisfied o' one thing," Bildad finally said, "and that is, that the bodies were spirited away by other red-skins while we war crossin' the Gallatin."

"Then what object would a red-skin have in carrying off the dead body of Kitty, if she were dead?" asked Harry.

"To lead friends in search o' it, and ambush 'em."

"I do not think so, Uncle; I do not even be-

lieve the two fellows I shot were Indians at all, but white men—outlaws in disguise—and that their bodies were carried off to conceal their identity. And, be Kitty dead or alive, the same murderous wretches have carried her away. There is one chance in a thousand that she escaped while we were crossing the river, fled into the hills and made her way home. Kitty was a brave and fearless girl."

Having thus expressed himself, Harry turned and walked away toward the bluffs, loth to give up the search despite the baffling shadows of the deepening night.

"I don't see as we can do any more, David," remarked Uncle Bildad, "cept to hurry to camp and give the alarm."

"That, perhaps, would be most prudent," replied Hanover.

"Harry has gone into the hills; the brave lad feels bad enough, for Kitty Boyne was the idol o' his heart—Great Lord! listen to that!"

It was the short, sharp bark of half a dozen revolvers that startled him. The report came from the hills whither Highland Harry had gone!

For a minute the two men stood as if stunned by the shock.

As the sound of the weapons reverberated through the hills they watched for the return of Harry, but, as he came not, Uncle Bildad leaped upon his pony, saying:

"Come, David! the boy, I fear, is done for, and to remain here longer will be death to us. We must warn the village! Ride, David, ride with whip and spur!"

And, as they dashed away, a rifle on the bluff above them rung out, and a bullet went shrieking closely over their heads like a shot from a howitzer.

CHAPTER III.

AN ASSASSIN'S SHOT.

It was night at Red Bar, and the greatest excitement and profoundest sorrow prevailed in the little village in consequence of threatened danger, the unknown fate of Kitty Boyne, and the supposed death of their young scout, Highland Harry.

In a few minutes the entire place was under arms, and a double line of guards stationed at exposed points.

Word had already been sent to Mr. Boyne, Kitty's father, of the girl's disappearance. His cabin stood about half a mile from the main part of the village, being the most isolated of all.

David Hanover became the guest of Judge Kinny, and, after he had been provided with a sumptuous supper, his host invited him to attend the settlers' meeting at the school-house, which invitation he accepted, and at once started with the judge for the place of meeting.

The gathering at the school-house was not large, owing to the number of men on guard.

Without delay those assembled entered upon the discussion of the situation, the uncertainty of Kitty's fate, and the dreadful fear that Highland Harry, their gallant young scout, had been slain.

But, in the midst of their discussions, what was their happy surprise and infinite joy to see Highland Harry, accompanied by Bill Boyne, enter the room!

A yell of joy greeted the Wizard Rifleman's appearance, and for a moment all was happy confusion. Uncle Bildad and David Hanover, who had reported the boy dead, looked perplexed; but the old settler quickly recovered from his confusion, and crowding up to Harry clasped his hand, saying:

"God bless your eyes, boy! we reported you dead—riddled by that volley o' pistol-shots!"

"The villains fired entirely too high," calmly replied the youth; "but it was all owing to the darkness in the woods. I was afraid you'd think I'd been shot, and so I ran out on the bluff and, as you rode away, fired a shot over your heads, in hopes you'd catch on to it."

"You young scamp!" exclaimed Bildad; "we thought that was a cannon-ball fired at us. But, what about your darter, Kitty?"

This last question was addressed to Boyne, from whose lips there escaped a low sigh as he replied:

"God only knows. I don't."

Mr. Boyne was a short, stout man of some fifty years. His face was covered with a closely-clipped beard, which added to the peculiar immobility of his features and utter absence of all expression. He had a dark-gray eye that seemed as fixed as that of a stone image—always seeking some object, usually on the ground, when talking, and keeping it there until his conversation had ended. No one had ever seen him

excited: he was always of the same even, dispassionate temperament, and from this fact he was called "The Sphinx" by those who knew what that was, and by others, "Stony" Boyne. He was the very opposite of his handsome, vivacious daughter; but, despite his eccentricities, he was well liked. He was a man of good parts, well informed, and since he had resided at Red Bar had conducted himself entirely contrary to the opinion that had at first been formed of his character by his downcast and quiet appearance.

The crowd gathered about the new-comers and plied them with many questions, and while thus engaged Uncle Bildad introduced Boyne to David Hanover.

"The Sphinx" took the stranger's hand in a mechanical sort of a way, and those who had their eyes upon him at the time saw him give Hanover a quick, furtive glance. At the same time they saw the faintest smile flit over the bearded face of the stranger, and thought they detected a coldness in his voice as he said:

"Mr. Boyne, you have my sympathy in your affliction."

The house being called to order, Highland Harry was called upon to make a statement as to the situation, and astounded his friends by the declaration:

"I do not believe there is an Indian within forty miles of here—not a hostile, at any rate. I am satisfied that Kitty was captured by white men in disguise. Those that fired on me were not Indians, but they were the friends of those I shot—the same that removed the bodies of their dead friends while we were crossing the river. Kitty may be dead, but I did my best to save her from a fate worse than death. The shot was a long one, and the setting sun almost before me. If she is alive, she will never be found, in my opinion, short of the Teton Basin, the Stronghold of the Outlaws."

"I never expect to see her alive," spoke up "Stony" Boyne in a reproving tone; "it was rather a reckless act to shoot when the Ingen had his body covered with that of the gal."

"That has been said to me before," said Harry with a twinge of pain, "but, God knows—"

"Highland Harry!" interrupted David Hanover, "I, in a moment of excitement, used such accusing language, and I now want to withdraw my severe words, and beg your pardon. I believe, now, that you did right. Your skill as a marksman, I fully believe, warranted so risky a shot under the circumstances."

"Thank you, Mr. Hanover," answered Harry, feeling greatly relieved; "I forgive the past, and hope for the best in the future."

"But, I don't understand, Harry," spoke up Captain Dalton, "why you think those fellows were outlaws."

"They did not act at all like Indians," Harry answered, "is one reason; but I think I have another and better, still."

"What is it?" exclaimed Uncle Bildad; "let her flip, Harry!"

"Yes, let it out," added Dalton, impatiently. Harry shook his head as he ran his eyes quickly over the eager, restless crowd.

"No," he replied; "I do not know but there may be ears right here that should not hear; but though there are none such, secrecy may be the best policy for the present."

A momentary silence followed this announcement, then David Hanover arose and said:

"I do not blame the young rifleman for his refusing to give a secret publicly in the hearing of a stranger—one he knows nothing about, therefore I will withdraw."

"Stay, sir!" quickly exclaimed Harry; "even with you away, I will not give my secret in this room."

"Can't you give us a hint o' how and where you got it, so we can guess at it?" Uncle Bildad asked, with a laugh.

"I shot it out of the heavens with my trusty rifle," the boy answered; but it was plain to all that he spoke in riddles, and knowing it would be useless to question him further, all fell to speculating upon his secret.

Finally the young rifleman proposed to retire to his private room, in Captain Dalton's cabin, let the meeting select three persons to visit him there and hear his secret, and they to decide as to whether it should be made public or not.

This proposition was readily accepted, and Captain Dalton, Judge Kinny, and Uncle Bildad were named as a committee to hear the scout's secret and report at once to the meeting, which took a recess of half an hour, or until the committee returned.

Most of the settlers arose and went out into the street to await the return of the trio, a few

remaining in the school-house with David Hanover.

It was quite dark that night, and this fact made the people of Red Bar all the more uneasy, for, if an attack on the place was intended, the shadows would favor the foe.

With hasty footsteps Highland Harry and the committee hurried to Captain Dalton's cabin. In Harry's little room they met. A window opened on the south side of the apartment. Over this the young rifleman drew a thin, muslin curtain; then he lit a candle and placed it upon a little stand around which the four seated themselves.

"Now, Harry, you can sail in and let her out," said Uncle Bildad.

"Well, for several days," Harry began without any preliminary remarks, "I have been scouting in the hills a hundred miles south of here. About noon, day before yesterday, while seated in a pass eating a cold lunch, I saw a beautiful white bird high in air flying southward upon swift wing. I thought little of it at the time, notwithstanding I have seldom seen a white bird in the mountains. But, along toward sunset of that day I was startled by a sharp cry that came from overhead. Raising my eyes I saw my white bird, or as I supposed, the same one, darting this way and that through the air pursued by a hawk. It was headed southward, also. Quickly raising my rifle I concluded to try a shot at the hawk, but just then the winged pirate darted down and seized the white bird. For a moment there was a struggle in mid-air, during which time the birds were almost stationary, and taking advantage of this I fired, and, with my usual good-luck sent a bullet through both hawk and bird that fell dead, almost at my feet. I saw at a glance the white bird was a pigeon—"

"A pigeon?" exclaimed Uncle Bildad—"a white pigeon?"

"Yes," the lad went on, "and stooping I picked it up, and—"

Harry did not finish the sentence. The sharp, short bark of a revolver outside the cabin, and the crash of a bullet through the window-glass, ended his narrative. With a gasp the young rifleman threw up his hands, his head dropped forward, a stream of blood trailed across his face, and before a helping hand could be extended, he fell motionless upon the floor!

"My God!" cried Dalton, "the boy has been slain—murdered!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERCEPTED MESSAGE.

"AN assassin! an assassin!" cried Judge Kinny, as he sprung to his feet in wildest excitement. "Captain Dalton, look to the boy, and Uncle Bildad and I will give the alarm!"

Out of the cabin rushed the judge and Durr, while Dalton lifted the limp form of Highland Harry from the floor and laid it upon a couch. He saw blood welling from a wound on the left side of the forehead, and without stopping to see whether life was extinct or not, he hurried from the room in search of Dr. Reed.

It was several minutes before he could find the doctor, so great was the excitement Kinny and Uncle Bildad had created; but when he did, they hurried away to the captain's house, and as they entered the supposed death-chamber, they were most happily surprised to see the young rifleman sitting up on his couch, rubbing his wounded head and gazing around him in bewilderment.

"Thank the Lord! he lives!" cried the captain, joyfully.

"It seems so," affirmed the doctor, "but he is hurt, and badly, too, I fear."

"How is this, captain?" the youth asked, looking around him like one dazed; "things are somewhat mixed up in my noddle. Didn't some one shoot?"

"Some one did shoot, Harry, and you got the bullet."

"Was it an accident or was it designed?"

"It was a designed, cold-blooded murder, boy, to prevent you telling your secret."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Harry, with a start, "I remember now; I was telling you about shooting the hawk and pigeon, and some one fired through the window. I recollect now of seeing a flash and that's all."

"Your wound," said the doctor, examining his head, "is only a scalp-wound, thank the Lord! You need apprehend no trouble. It was a glancing shot, but it takes an iron-clad head to turn even that kind of a bullet, my boy. I don't think the would-be assassin is as good with fire-arms as the Wizard Rifleman."

While the doctor was dressing the wound, the captain went out and informed the sorrow-

stricken settlers that their young scout was not dead, nor even seriously hurt; and then shouts of joy long and loud awoke the echoes around Red Bar.

A few persons went into Harry's room, among them being David Hanover and "Stony" Boyne, both of whom warmly congratulated the youth upon his miraculous escape from death.

The most careful search of the village failed to discover the would-be murderer, or any trace of him. The men on guard were all ready to make oath that no person could have passed in and out of the town unobserved, and it was their opinion that the assassin had entered before the guard was set, and that he was still inside the lines!

In the course of a couple of hours, Harry had so far regained his composure as to propose finishing his story; then the committee was called in and others dismissed.

A guard was stationed outside near the window, a heavy curtain hung over the opening, and seating himself, Harry said:

"Let's see, where did I leave off?"

"You'd just taken up the dead bird when the unknown popped you with his pop," explained Uncle Bildad, with a grin.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the lad. "Well, I looked the bird over, and in doing so I found a tiny bit of folded paper—"

"By the ashes of Blackstone!" cried Judge Kinny, "then it was a homing pigeon!"

"That is exactly what it was," replied Harry, producing the bit of paper and handing it to Kinny.

It was a small affair—less than an inch square when folded, and directed on the outside in pencil to "H. SEGUIN." When it was unfolded it was perhaps four inches square, one side being covered with rather dim writing in a very fine hand. It was so dim, in fact, that with the aid of his glasses the judge could not read it. The captain tried it and gave it up, saying:

"It's Greek to me. Can you read it, Harry?"

"I have read it," the youth answered, "although, when I first looked at it, it was a blank piece of paper except the name on the outside. But I mistrusted it was a secret message, and the name on it led me to believe it was the work of some villain. As soon as I saw it was a blank, I remembered what an old detective, named Bandy, had once told me about secret ciphers and letters. He said milk—cow's, mare's, or goat's milk—was often used for ink which was invisible until subjected to a certain degree of heat, when the lines and words would appear quite distinctly."

"Believing this such a missive I determined to test it, and lighting a fire I heated two smooth-surfaced stones to what I thought the proper degree not to burn, and laid the paper between them. When I looked at it a few moments later, lo! and behold! there it was, sure enough! The heat had brought out every line and letter. I read it with ease, and forthwith started for Red Bar in hopes of being on time to thwart the designs of the sender. I'll try and read it:

("IN DUPLICATE.")

"Aug. 12th, 18—"

Seguin, word from down river to effect that Raymond is on Grimm's trail and headed for Red Bar. If you would possess Kitty you must strike at once. Come in force. Disguise part as Ingins. Every evening the girl rides down river—mostly alone. Let Ingins capture her and then you rescue her from the supposed reds, and maybe you'll become her hero. She dotes on heroes. If successful, make at once for Basin. Look sharp for Highland Harry, the Wizard. A shot from him's death. Sent first message forenoon.

BAT."

"By the new Jerusalem!" ejaculated Uncle Bildad, when the boy had finished the message, "that's an eye-opener, sure; but who in Halifax is 'Bat'?"

"A spy in this village—an outlaw spy!" declared the judge.

"But of all in Red Bar, who has, or ever has had, a homing pigeon about?" asked Harry.

"No one—not a soul—not a pigeon," responded Captain Dalton.

"If I could have got the first bird," said Harry, "as well as this one, I would have spoilt the arrangements of Mr. Bat."

"Yes, for Seguin got the first message, and you the duplicate; and the villain has carried out 'Bat's' programme well, if not quite successfully," the judge observed; "but, where do you suppose Seguin was, at the time?"

"In Jack Hart's stronghold, in Teton Basin, whither he was instructed to flee, with his captive," answered Harry. "I believe now he was

one of the active members of Hart's gang when he used to visit Red Bar."

"What a shame it is," observed Dalton, regretfully, "that we did not hang him when he was within reach! But, Harry, I presume you have told Boyne nothing of this message?"

"Not a word, captain; he accused me of reckless shooting and intimated that I had killed his daughter thereby. Moreover, Mr. Boyne has always treated me coolly. I don't think I have been a welcome visitor at his cabin, at any time, except by Kitty."

"He got so uproariously taken in on Seguin comin' to see his gal that I reckon he thought he'd kick ag'inst all beaus," suggested Uncle Bildad, with a hearty laugh.

"Yes, he was struck on Seguin," affirmed the judge, "and we all thought he was some punkins when he fu'st struck the Bar. It may be his failure to win Kitty's hand, by fair means, drove him distracted, and into the Basin, and then made up his mind to be avenged on Red Bar by stealing our little queen Kitty. In that he may have been successful and he may not—God only knows."

"I think," said Harry, "that he was successful to the extent of getting Kitty, be she dead or alive. In the morning I will look up their trail and I may be able to determine her fate. If she was killed, her body will be found, unless the work of Seguin is that of revenge, in which case he may even conceal the body to torment her father and the people of Red Bar."

"The infernal hound!" Uncle Bildad muttered vengeancefully.

"You can report to the gathering in waiting at the school-house," Highland Harry went on, "that I intend to start for Teton Basin in the morning, or as soon thereafter as I can make arrangements; and if Kitty is dead I will avenge her death, and if living, do all I can to save her. If no one wishes to go with me I will go alone."

"By the shades o' Jerroboam!" exclaimed Bildad Durr, "how would this old kid suit you for a chum?"

"I could think of no better," replied Harry.

"Shake! It's a go!" declared the old man; "together we'll invade the haunts o' them outlaws and cut-throats!"

"That's settled, then," said Harry; "but, friends, I presume the folks at the school-house are anxiously awaiting your return. You know my secret and my purposes, and you can make just whatever report you see fit. But, one thing let me impress upon your minds, and that is, that there is a traitor and spy—my would-be assassin—in your midst this very moment! Be on your guard, and see that 'Bat' sends no more messages to the Outlaw of Teton Basin!"

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVIL'S TRAP.

THE scene of our story changes.

Southward through Snake Canyon, one of the most sinuous and difficult defiles of the great mountains, two men are making their way.

They are the Wizard Rifleman, and Uncle Bildad, the mountaineer and Red Bar settler.

Three days have passed since they left Red Bar. With the fate of Kitty Boyne still a mystery, they are headed for the Teton Basin, determined to penetrate the outlaw stronghold or die in the attempt.

Both Harry and Uncle Bildad were familiar with the windings, the open valleys, and deep, dark and narrow gorges of Snake Canyon that stretched away almost to the base of the central of the Three Tetons. Water could only be found at long intervals, so that the scouts were compelled to time their day's journey accordingly.

The night of the third day they expected to encamp at a place in the canyon known as the Devil's Trap, and as it was an easy day's journey they traveled more leisurely than the two days preceding.

So far they had been compelled to use little caution, for they knew Snake Canyon was seldom traveled on account of its dearth of water, and its narrow, choked passages so frequently met with. Moreover, by taking this route they would be less liable to be discovered by the vigilant outlaws, as the latter would not be expecting enemies by such a trail. So they thought at least.

The sun was about two hours' high when the scouts emerged from a deep, dark defile into a little, oblong valley of perhaps fifty acres in area. It was devoid of timber, except a few scattering pines along the base of the environing bluffs, but covered with a growth of short, woolly grass, interspersed here and there with bunches of sage bushes.

Near the center of this vale was the "Devil's Trap," one of those odd and unique stone formations so often met with in the great mountains. At a distance it looked like the ruins of a great stone building; and there were those of a scientific mind who believed it was the remains of a stone fortress of an age coeval with that of ancient Mexico and Central America. It was an immense pile of gigantic rocks covering a quarter of an acre of ground. They had been thrown together so as to form an open court near the center, a couple rods in extent, and in this opening was a spring of pure cool water that had no visible outlet.

None of the rocks were over fifteen feet high, and flat on top. There were no less than half a score of cracks or fissures, extending from top to bottom, by which the opening could be reached from the outside. One or two of these were wide enough to admit a man on horseback. Not one of them ran straight through, but zigzagged here and there, often two of them coming together before reaching the opening in the center, so that one, standing inside, could not see out in any direction except overhead.

Peculiar as this accident of nature, if I may so call it, was, the place would have received no more than passing notice had it not been for the spring inside. And this had been regarded as the alluring power of the Devil's Trap, for in the shadows of the narrow passages the sly old panther lay in wait to pounce upon the timid deer that came there to drink. There, no doubt, for ages past had the bloodthirsty red-skins lain in wait for foe or quarry. There, no doubt, had man met man and beast met beast and fought to the death, the victor slaking his thirst in blood as well as water. The bleaching, decaying bones 'round and about the place, and even in the narrow passages, attested all this.

Indian tradition and white man's superstition had given Snake Canyon, as well as the Devil's Trap, an unsavory reputation, and it was this fact, as well as the difficulties to be encountered in traversing the pass, that kept the Indians and mountaineers out of the canyon. This Highland Harry knew, and having no superstitious blood in his veins, he had hoped to profit by it. More than once he had slept alone in the Devil's Trap without fear or fright.

But the youth was too much of a mountaineer to approach the place unguardedly, and before he and Uncle Bildad ventured within they made a complete circuit of the stone-pile. Finding no trace of any one having preceded them there that day, they entered a passage and proceeded to the opening around which the rocks rose straight up like a wall.

The ground in the opening was covered with gravel and spalts from the face of the rock. The spring was at one side, its waters clear as crystal and inviting to the thirsty, dust-begrimed scouts.

Leaning his gun against the wall Uncle Bildad threw himself upon the ground with an air of relief, removed his hat and wiped the dust and perspiration from his brow. Highland Harry laid his gun down and walked over to the spring to get a drink. As he did so, he started back, his eyes fixed on the ground before him, saying:

"By smoly hoke! Uncle, there's been some one or something here lately, after all!"

"Yes, and they're here yet!"

It was a strange voice that spoke thus from out of one of the passages converging there, and it was accompanied by the quick tread of feet, and looking around Highland Harry found himself and Uncle Bildad covered with the revolvers of two desperate-looking men, one of whom exclaimed:

"Hands up, Highland Harry and pard, or you die instanter!"

To add to the force of this command and threat, four more armed villains, two of whom were leering savages, emerged from concealment and confronted the surprised mountaineers.

Never was Highland Harry taken so completely off his guard, and he saw at a glance that he was wholly at the outlaws' mercy. Resistance would be sure death in the face of those cocked and pointed revolvers, and so he did the only sensible thing for him to do, and threw up his hands, Uncle Bildad following his example.

"Them's the proper perceedin's," said the outlaw spokesman, "for I, Pistol Jim, never axes a feller the second time to throw up."

"Darn your measly skins!" exclaimed Uncle Bildad, reproachfully, "you're a pack o' sneaks. If you'd give us a half show we'd wallop the hull o' you!"

"Oh, we're not around givin' shows to be

shot, we ar'n't," replied Pistol Jim, with an air of triumph. "We're 'round takin' in stragglers sich as you folks. Yakima, you and Bruiser Bill advance and hit them gents' weepers for 'em. We don't want their hands down with a pop in their reach. That kid's too flip with a barker to 'low him to tech one o' them. We want to make sure o' him this time."

"Cowards! villains!" hissed Harry, "give me a show and I'll take my chances with—"

"Oh, you're game, Highland Harry," interrupted the outlaw, "but we don't fear your mouth. You've permission to bang away with that all you want to; it's that 'tarnal old long ranger o' a rifle that you handle so reckless that makes our folks bashful when you're 'round loose. You see, we knew you were comin' down Snake Canyon on yer way to Teton Basin, and 'spectin' you'd haul up here for refreshments, we laid for you in a way-up style."

"Expectin' us!" sneered Uncle Bildad. "Harry, I reckon 'Bat's' been sendin' out more pigeons."

The outlaw laughed.

"You're catchin' on, ain't you?" he said; "I reckon you fellers begin to see that gittin' into the Teton Basin isn't so easy as ye thought! Smarter chaps than you have tried it and died."

Harry was about to make some reply to the villain's remarks when he was admonished to silence by sight of an object in the passage directly behind and over the outlaw's head. It had appeared from behind an angle in the gap. It was a big, round object, which might have been taken for a full moon just rising had it been at all luminous; but it was not—it was a dark object which the young mountaineer readily discovered was a human head and face. A pair of half-closed eyes, the lids drooping at the outer corners, an immense nose of the Roman type, a prodigious big mouth wreathed about with a serio-comic expression, a beardless, boyish face covered all over with freckles, made up a cast of features that sent a thrill of joy and hope to the heart of the Wizard Rifleman.

He recognized the face poked up from behind the rock as that of a friend—a fellow mountaineer, one Jack Bowman, better known as Ajax, the Infant Giant. A young man of two-and-twenty, standing nearly seven feet in his moccasins, broad-shouldered and brawny-breasted, with muscles of iron, he was a giant indeed in size, as well as in strength, with a spirit brave and daring to correspond. Knowing the giant's fearless and impulsive nature, Highland Harry expected to see him leap forward upon the unsuspecting outlaws at any moment; but in this he was disappointed. The Colossus raised his finger in a warning gesture, shook his big bull head, wrenched his mottled face into a horrid grimace, then stepped back and disappeared in the passage.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRAPPERS TRAPPED.

HIGHLAND HARRY was left in doubt as to the intentions of the Infant Giant. He had hoped that he would attack the outlaws before he and Bildad Durr were disarmed, but being disappointed in this he could only await the Giant's pleasure.

Meanwhile the two outlaws addressed as Yakima Jule and "Bruiser" Bill advanced and took possession of the mountaineers' weapons. This done "Pistol" Jim and his companion lowered their revolvers and opened upon the prisoners a tirade of abuse and taunts on the failure of their mission to Teton Basin.

But suddenly, in the midst of an outburst of laughter, a long, vivid tongue of fire shot from out one of the shadow-choked passages, accompanied by the crack of a revolver, and two of the robbers fell dead, pierced through by one and the same bullet.

Before a man could turn, the Titan form of Ajax came bounding into the opening, a roar like that of a lion pealing from his lips.

Had a thunderbolt fell from the starry sky the outlaws could not have been taken by greater surprise. Even a second shot from the giant's revolver was fired, and one of the two savages killed, before the villains had fully comprehended the situation. When they did, it was too late to act, for the next instant the iron fist of the Infant laid Bruiser Bill and Yakima Jule prostrate upon the earth; while the surviving Indian, to escape a similar fate, took to his heels. Swiftly he flew across the opening, but suddenly collided with a figure that came bounding into the opening from the very passage he was aiming to reach, and both he and the unknown were hurled backward to the earth, half-stunned by the shock.

Quickly Uncle Bildad bounded to the side of the red-skin and gave him a kick in the stomach that curled him up like a sick bear; and Highland Harry was in the act of serving the unknown in a similar manner when he recognized him as an old and respected friend.

"By smoly hoke!" he exclaimed, "it's Spokane Joe!"

"'Tis for a fact, but's the fight over? who licked?" the old hunter asked, springing to his feet and looking around him like one confused.

"Fight's all over, Joe," responded Harry. "Ajax, the Infant Giant, dropped in here and did the job all up like a whip."

"Gol darn that big, speckled-faced kid!" with an affected contemptuous glance over at Ajax, who was coolly gathering up the outlaws' weapons and piling them at one side; "that feller's alers sp'illin' some o' my calculations o' late. I knowed them robbers war here, and war watchin' their movements when you two fellers come in sight. Before I could w. rn you o' danger ye slipped into the Trap. Then I thought I'd cover myself all over with glory by comin' over here and lickin' the outfit. I didn't know 'Jax war here."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the young Giant, advancing to greet his old friends, "you did git in late, Spoky, but I'm glad to see you jist the same. And you, also, Highland Harry and Uncle Bildad, whom I now greet with joy seeing I've been too busy to do so before. By say, folks, wasn't there a sudden change in the climate round here, tho'? Them outlaws were warblin' off taunts and musical laughter to you folks in cherubic style, wasn't they?"

"Yes, they had the drop on us for awhile," responded Uncle Bildad. "You struck this vicinity in jist the proper season."

"I should remark," answered the young Giant, with a glance at Bruiser Bill and Yakima, who were gradually recovering from the confusion of mind occasioned by Ajax's fist; "but them bilious outlaws don't know I was here before they were. The fact of it is, when they arrived I lay on top of this stone-pile squeeze into a dimple of the rock like a smile of summer sunshine. I see'd you fellers approaching, and could have warned you away, but then I'd had no fun. It's the first rumpus I've had for a month. Times are awful dull in these hills, boys."

The Giant's remarks were somewhat characteristic of the man himself. As before stated, he was a man of twenty-two years, but his face was smooth as that of a boy of sixteen. In fact, he looked more like a great, awkward, overgrown boy than a man. His outer garments were of buckskin and worn in a decided slovenly manner. His trowsers were held in place by a leather belt, which was dragged low upon his hips by the weight of two big navy revolvers. His pockets were bulging with metallic cartridges, while his blue flannel shirt was disposed to escape through the six-inch space between the top of his pants and the bottom of his hunting-jacket.

But despite his carelessness of personal habits, his boyish appearance and apparent reckless way, Ajax, as he had been aptly called, was a man of dauntless courage, a fearless, dashing spirit, Herculean strength, and indomitable will. Socially he was a jolly, rollicking, big-hearted boy.

After he had greeted his friends and explained his position at the beginning of the contest to them, the Infant Giant turned to the outlaws, saying:

"I must not neglect these folks; as I'm host in this ranch to-night, I want to entertain all guests the best I can."

"This affair may not be so funny, you big sloven, before you are done with it!" Bruiser Bill remarked as he sat upon the ground, his hands locked around his knees, that were drawn up almost to his chin.

"Bruiser William—I believe that's what I heard you called," responded Ajax thrusting his thumbs behind his belt, "do be docile now; don't throw out any insinuations and scare my friends here all away. I don't want to be left alone with you—I'm bashful before strangers."

"You're a fool—a brutal blow-hard!" declared Yakima.

"I reckon as what he did blow hard ag'in' you pilgrims," observed Spokane Joe. "The Infant smacks a feller's mug awful solid, I know, from the looks o' your catty-wampus features."

"I think," said Highland Harry, "it would be well to place our friends, the enemy, in bonds, as it is almost night and we don't want them to lose us."

"Devilish facetious, ain't you, Highland Harry?" said Bruiser Bill. "A little while ago it was altogether another tune."

"Yes, sung by Bruiser William and Pistol James to the tune of 'bravado,' but your concert ended in a panic."

The belts of the dead outlaws were cut into strips and with these Ajax bound the two outlaws and Spokane's Indian.

Then the young giant took up the bodies of the dead men, and with apparent ease threw them on top of the rocky wall, saying as he did so:

"They'll make buzzard grub."

"Go your length, wretches!" Bruiser Bill said. "It's a long lane that has no turn. You may kill us, and I presume you will, but whether you do or not, *your* doom is sealed. You may even git into the 'Basin,' but you'll never git out. That's some consolation to us. Our folks knew before you left Red Bar that you was comin'—"

"Got a pigeon message, eh?" interrupted Harry. "Well, I got one, too, the other day." "Yes, and with your boasted, conceited skill as a shooter you killed—murdered—an innocent girl, Kitty Boyne."

"I—I do not believe it!" stammered Harry, unable to conceal the pang the outlaw's words sent to his heart.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the villain; "that teches the Wizard Rifleman in a tender spot, don't it, girl-killer? But it are a cold fact; Kitty Boyne died back in the hills an hour or two after you shot her!"

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISED CAMP.

BRUISER BILL'S declaration sent a barb of rankling pain through Highland Harry's very heart. He could not doubt the truth of the outlaw's words. They were so hedged about by certain other incidents, spoken of by the prisoner, that he knew were facts, that he could no longer cherish the hope of seeing Kitty Boyne alive again.

To conceal his emotions the young rifleman turned and walked away through the stone-pile out into the open valley. There alone he gave up to mental reflections. His thoughts went back to Red Bar. He was satisfied beyond all doubt now that there was a traitor among the settlers, but of all of them who could that person be? He knew of no one having pigeons of any kind at Red Bar, yet they must have been there, carefully concealed. By this means had the Outlaws of Teton Basin learned of his and Bildad Durr's start to explore their stronghold, and the very course they had taken.

Hitherto, the hopes of finding Kitty Boyne alive, and of rescuing her, had inspired the youth to brave the hardships and dangers of the dread Teton Basin; but now that inspiration was gone and a sense of sadness oppressed him. Yet he resolved to do his duty—go on and if possible explore the land of the outlaws.

By this time it was quite dark. The stars came out in the great blue dome of heaven. All around the grim, rugged mountains rose up against the sky, and high above all—clearly outlined—rose the Shark's Tooth, the central peak of the Three Tetons, throwing its shadow almost to where Highland Harry stood, yet weary leagues away.

As he paced to and fro along the base of the "Trap," Harry could hear, ever and anon, the voice of Ajax peal out in rollicking laughter, and he almost envied the young Giant his happy, buoyant spirit.

Rallying himself from his mind and heart's dejection he was about returning to his friends when he detected a faint sound like that made by the trampling of hooved feet. Dropping to his knees he applied his ear to the ground and listened for several moments. Then rising he hurried back to his friends and soon returned outside again, accompanied by Ajax.

"Ajax," he said, "there are horsemen in Snake Canyon approaching from the north."

The two listened. The sound could now be plainly heard.

"Right you are, Highland Harry!" declared the big mountaineer, "and judgin' by the sound there's a whole regiment of them. Now, what are they?—soldiers, outlaws or Indians?"

"They are not soldiers," replied Harry, "that I feel certain of; nor do I think they are outlaws, for the outlaws would hardly attempt to travel this canyon with so many horses as appear to be in that cavalcade."

"Then two from three leaves one, and that's Ingins," said the young Giant; "now, then, I don't know how they may figger up, and if

they're hostiles and call here, twenty or thirty'll be all we four'll care 'bout fighting at a whirl."

"They can hardly be Crows so far from home," said Harry, "unless out on a horse-stealing raid; but why they should be headed this way unless going to raid Teton Basin, I don't understand. I'm of the opinion they are a band of Sioux, Snakes and others from over east, entering this canyon by way of Hayden's trail. If so, they are undoubtedly hostile, and are endeavoring to make the spring here before halting for the night. Ajax, there isn't room in this valley for us four and forty or fifty hostile red-skins."

"Then we'd better fall back in order to the hills," Ajax suggested, "rather than undertake to keep the varmints away from here. But I'll send out the old folks and you can consult with them."

So saying the Giant returned to the spring and sent Uncle Bildad and Spokane Joe out, and when they had been informed of the approach of horsemen, not only by word of mouth, but by the sound of trampling hoofs, Old Spokane said:

"They must be Sioux from south o' the 'Park,' for I saw just yesterday what I s'posed to be an advance party o' them red varmints, and they war in paint and feathers, too, ready for fight. Where they're goin' I can't imagine, but we'd better get out of this, anyhow."

"What about our prisoners?" asked Uncle Bildad.

"Leave them to the mercy o' the savages," answered Old Spokane; "we can't be incumbered with them, and if they are, or are not, known to be outlaws, the reds'll attend to 'em, for Jack Hart's gang has stolen more hosses from the Ingins than the whites, and the'r hair's in demand as well as yours."

"Then we must be off, for they're coming near."

Hurrying back to the interior of the stone-pile they informed Ajax of their intentions. With a look of regret on his face, the young Giant turned to the fettered outlaws, saying:

"By-by, Bruiser Billy and Yakima Jule; we must part, and if forever, fare thee well. Old Plenty Cows, the Crow, or Squatting Calf, the Sioux, and a band o' warriors are comin' this way, and we'll leave you to their tender mercy. Be brave, Bruiser, as a Trojan, and lie like an Arab, and mebbe they'll spare you. Paw the air, Yakima, and swear, like a tragedian, by yonder rising moon and them blinking stars you'll mop the earth with Ajax, the Infant Cyclone, and Highlo' Harry, the Wizard Death-Shot, and mebbe they'll not only spare you, but ordain you as a valorous warrior. By showing the proper disregard for the truth and rippin' up the atmosphere in a frantic manner, you may be spared the burning scalping-knife and the splitting tomahawk. Ajew, ajew!"

With a wave of his hand the Giant turned and hurried away, and joining his friends awaiting him outside, the four started off through the darkness down the canyon.

They had not gone more than forty rods before the horsemen reached the Devil's Trap and halted. They listened, and to their surprise heard a confusion of voices, oaths and commands to their animals that told them the party was not Indians, but outlaws!

"By hokey!" exclaimed Highland Harry, "we've overshot the mark, boys, leaving them three villains alive, for that's a gang of outlaws with a drove of horses—stolen ones, no doubt!"

"Then Bruiser and Yakima 'll be after our hair hotter'n yellow hornets' javelins," declared Ajax; "and we'll have to waste some gun-fodder on them. But say, how solemnly still things have become 'round and about the Trap! I reckon they're listening to Bruiser and pard's story of the horde of mountaineers that swept down upon them like Assyrians and smote them hip and thigh."

Moving on the narrowing valley soon crowded the four into a deep, dark, wooded defile. Here they again stopped to listen, when they discovered that those hooved feet were again in motion—coming directly toward them at a lively pace.

"Oh, John Rodgers!" exclaimed Ajax. "I wish we could block this gap some way and head them off!"

"That's impossible," replied Harry; "but they seem to be in a big hurry. I presume Bruiser and Yakima have told them a big story and scared them into improving the cover of night. But, boys, let's to cover until they pass."

Stepping aside the four men concealed themselves in the shadows of the defile.

In a few minutes a man rode into the pass leading a pony around whose neck was suspend-

ed a tinkling bell. Thirty or forty horses were following behind these, while no less than ten or fifteen mounted men brought up the rear. Among these the loud voice of the redoubtable Bruiser Bill could be easily distinguished proclaiming in language most vehement against the mountaineers in general, and Ajax in particular.

"He's reading your title to a corner in sheol, Ajax," Highland Harry whispered, to his big companion.

"I expect he is feeling rank against me," replied Ajax, "for I smacked him hard on the face and gave him a tremendous kick in the short ribs. I wish now I'd knocked off a lung or two."

The outlaws passed on up the canyon, and, so far as the mountaineers could see, manifested no fear of pursuers; and after a short consultation the quartet concluded to follow them just as far as possible, as no better opportunity could be offered to get into the Basin.

Scarcely five miles, however, had been traversed when the whole band came to a halt in a grassy valley similar to that surrounding the Devil's Trap. And it soon became evident that they had stopped for the night. The horses were turned loose to graze in the valley which was well surrounded by a palisade of perpendicular bluffs.

A guard was stationed in the pass at the upper and lower end of the valley; then a fire was lighted just within the fringe of timber at the base of the western bluffs, and the outlaws proceeded to cook their supper.

The villains seemed well provided with fresh meat, which fact was evidence that their stealing incursion had reached some cattle-pen as well as horse ranch.

"Darn their impudent hides!" Ajax growled, in an undertone; "they've halted for the night, sure. They don't seem to care a whip for our presence in Snake Canyon. That's pure contempt, boys, for the Wizard Rifleman and his pards, and I am for teaching them manners. We're good for the whole caboodle."

"Easy, friend," replied Highland Harry; "I would rather get into Teton Basin at their heels than to kill the whole gang. That drove of horses will leave a plain trail. We can make them villains our guides to their own hidden retreat."

"That's all true, Death-Pop, but it looks like a waste of opportunities for piles of fun and fight," Ajax responded; "you see, we're *inside* the guard line, too slick, and all we would have to do is to wade right in and paralyze them. But I can stand it if you say it's best, Pard Harry."

"Let us wait awhile, at least," suggested the Boy Rifleman; "they may move on as soon as they have eaten their supper and rested a spell. And there may be others back looking for we folks."

Concealed within one hundred yards of the outlaws, the mountaineers could see every movement they made within the light of their camp-fire.

Amid the activity of the gang in cooking supper, a loud and hilarious conversation was carried on. The lamentations of Bruiser Bill and Yakima Jule, and the recent death of three of their friends at Devil's Trap, did not seem to oppress their spirits in the least.

Presently the savory odor of broiling beef-steak pervaded the valley like an incense, and assailed the olfactories of the mountaineers. Ajax, who had not tasted food since morning, and who was blessed with an appetite commensurate with his size, said, as he sniffed the air and smacked his lips:

"Fumes of glory! that odor is more aggravating to me than the presence of the outlaws. I'm hungrier than a coyote—I'm always hungry, for that matter. Boys, I can never squat here and watch them outlaws quietly devouring that steak. Something must be done."

"Say, you," Spokane Joe spoke up, "if you don't keep a little stiller somethin' will be did—Bruiser Bill will stuff your 'natomy with cold lead 'stead o' thoroughbred beefsteak from some Gallatin ranch."

"All right, Joseph," the Giant replied; "from now until something happens I'll be dumb in silence, and content to inhale the sweet-scented ozone for supper."

While cooking their meal the outlaws unbuckled their belts, and, with their revolvers attached, laid them aside to enjoy the better their repast by unhampering their stomachs' capacity.

Like Ajax, the outlaws had undoubtedly fasted since the previous night or morning. At any rate, it required nearly an hour's work of all

hands present to prepare food sufficient for the entire party; and when at length their task was completed, and they had seated themselves on the earth to enjoy it, Harry almost trembled with suspense through fear that the impulsive, devil-may-care Ajax might take it into his head to spoil the outlaws' supper by some demonstration or other.

But before the Giant could do so, in case he had any notion of it at all, the keen ears of the entire four suddenly detected a sound like that made by the soft tread of many feet. It was so dark they could see nothing. Every man held his breath and listened. The sound grew a little louder, then it grew fainter—seemed to pass them, moving in the direction of the outlaw camp.

"By the shades o' the temple!" whispered Uncle Bildad in evident confusion of mind, "that wor the tread o' ghosts! Boys, this spot is ha'nted!"

"Softly! softly!" Harry commanded, bending low: "I see shadowy forms moving between us and the outlaws' light—moving toward them!"

Scarcely had he uttered the last word when there burst upon the night a scream

"As if all the fiends from heaven that fell Had pealed the banner cry of hell!"

"Ingins! Crows!" yelled Ajax aloud, springing to his feet. "They're onto the robbers, and I'm going to have a foot in the frolic!"

And before his friends could realize his intention and restrain him, the impulsive young Giant lunged away through the bushes and with a yell that sounded like a fog-horn above the tempest-like cries of the red-skins, he joined in the attack upon the outlaws!

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INGLORIOUS RETREAT.

"CONFOUND that big, wild bullephant!" exclaimed Harry in vexation, as the young Giant, Ajax, tore madly away and joined the Crows in their attack on the robber gang; "he'll get his head broke and all of us into trouble."

Highland Harry was not sure of the friendliness of the Crows. There had been for a long time rumors of an uprising among them, and their appearance there, over one hundred miles from their usual beat, made him apprehensive. True, they may have only followed the outlaws there to recover their stolen stock, but if at war with the whites in general, Ajax would find himself in no enviable position.

The outlaws had but fairly begun their repast when the attack was made, and never were men more completely surprised and terror-stricken. Feeling perfectly safe from intrusion in their knowledge of being guarded by the most trusty of men stationed in the approaches to the valley, they were enjoying themselves as if at a social banquet in their own stronghold. But as that horrible yell fell upon their ears, the food dropped from their nerveless hands, and as a man they sprung to their feet and vanished before the foe into the darkness as shadows vanish before a burst of sunshine—leaving behind, in their headlong flight, their weapons, their saddles, their supper and two or three half-stunned friends.

The Crows made no attempt to follow the frightened thieves, but at once took possession of the deserted camp; and the three watchers in the bushes saw Ajax, towering head and shoulders above the red-skins, immediately surrounded by the victorious followers of Old Plenty Cows. They trembled for his safety, and held themselves in readiness for action should his life be threatened.

They saw the Giant swinging his fists about him as if to keep the red-skins at bay, and heard him talking in excited tones, but in the Babel of savage voices they could not understand what he was saying. When, however, they finally heard him burst into a roar of laughter in which the Crows joined him in yells of savage delight, all doubts of his safety were dispelled.

However, the three mountaineers remained secreted. They were not sure yet of the Indians' friendship for the whites in general, which Ajax had won in particular by his service in their behalf.

In a few moments the crowd about the Infant Giant dissolved, and all seating themselves upon the ground began devouring the outlaws' supper like famished coyotes, Ajax included.

For the time being the Giant seemed to forget the friends he had so unceremoniously left in the bushes, but they overlooked this neglect in the amusement afforded them by the Infant's antic performances.

But there was one who did not enjoy the big mountaineer's proceedings, and that was the

luckless Bruiser Bill. Singled out by Ajax at the beginning of the attack, the outlaw was stricken down by the Giant's fist half-unconscious, and, being unable to escape, he sat a prisoner under a Crow tomahawk, a silent, sullen witness of his big enemy's enjoyment.

After the outlaws' supper had been devoured, Old Plenty Cows, the chief who had led in the successful pursuit of the robbers, seated himself near Ajax and the two conversed together for some minutes in low tones.

Finally Ajax arose and, waving the red-skins a grandiloquent adieu, left the camp and rejoined his friends chuckling with suppressed laughter.

"Well, you've played thunder and got your supper into the bargain, haven't you?" Highland Harry said.

"Oh, King Peter!" exclaimed the Giant, between fits of laughter, "I never, never had such stacks of fun as I'm havin' this blessed old August night. But I didn't forgit you, pard, and brought each of you a slab of broiled, juicy steak big as a saddle-skirt. Here, treat your stomachs to a bit of Belshazzar's feast. And then you want to look out for more fun. Plenty Cows is going to send Bruiser Billy out into the darkness to invite the horse-thieves back into camp and give them their horses and let 'em go."

"What does the old fool mean by that?" asked Harry.

"Why, Death-Pop, don't you know that a Crow Indian prides himself on his skill as a horse-thief, and has the greatest respect and admiration for others of the same accomplishment, be they red or white? But the Crow that gets caught at stealing a horse, or loses it after it's been stolen, is eternally disgraced. Now, he thinks that by gettin' them outlaws back and givin' them up their horses, they'll be so humiliated, crestfallen and disgraced that Jack Hart's hull band will feel the blow and never visit another Crow horse-corral."

"But perhaps the outlaws won't feel the disgrace like the Crow," Harry observed: "nor even venture back by invitation into camp."

"Of course not; what's an outlaw care about disgrace and the honors of a horse thief, as the Crow does? As to venturing back to camp, they'll do so if they think they can get possession of their weapons, take the red-skins off their guard and clean 'em out. But hark! negotiations have already opened. Listen to the mocking-bird."

Sure enough, from the darkness of the wooded bluff they could hear a voice calling to Plenty Cows. The latter answered, and then for fully an hour a conversation was carried on in the Crow jargon. At first it was at long-range, but gradually the fellow in the darkness approached the camp until he was faintly visible in the camp light. The result of the conference was that, in a short time after it had ended, some fifteen rather sheepish-looking horse-thieves came marching into camp, though endeavoring to appear cheerful and indifferent.

The Indians at once set up a loud laughing, and pointing their fingers at them, began uttering the most exasperating jeers and taunts. The robbers, however, seemed to take it all in good part, but at once endeavored, by parley, to obtain possession of their deserted weapons; but this request was refused them. The Indians were cunning enough to mistrust that if the villains got possession of their arms they might endeavor to retrieve their honor by a bloody assault upon them. However, they continued their jeering—calling the robbers "squaw horse-thief," and other exasperating epithets. Bruiser Bill kept walking about among the red-skins as if looking for something or some one, as he undoubtedly was; and while thus engaged he was followed by a little weazen-faced warrior, who ever and anon would kick out at him and neigh like a horse.

This the Indian kept up until, losing control of his already inflamed temper, Bruiser Bill slapped him in the face. Instantly the unlucky outlaw was set upon by the Crows and pounded most unmercifully. His friends attempted to rescue him, when the whole gang was attacked by the red-skins and kicked and cuffed about so savagely that they were forced for the second time to beat an inglorious retreat to the hills, minus horses, arms and reputation.*

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE TETON BASIN.

AMONG the most remarkable landmarks of the great Rocky Mountains are the "Three Teton," a range of needle-pointed peaks, extend-

ing from the grand canyon of the Snake River on the east, and Pierre's Hole on the west northward a distance of forty miles to the southern boundary of the National Park of the Yellowstone. They are a part of what was once termed the Wind River Mountains, which region among explorers bore the deserved reputation of being the most rugged and impenetrable of all the ranges of the great backbone of the American Continent.

In the Teton Basin, a wild and secluded mountain recess, impossible to reach except by aid of experienced guides, a band of outlaws, composed of white men of various nationalities and a few Indian half-breeds, made their headquarters. The place is a little paradise abounding in wood, water and grass; and at the time of which I write many of the outlaws were living there in houses with their families, and raising crops of grain and vegetables for their own sustenance, as well as levying heavily upon the horse and cattle ranches for two hundred miles around them. And this they did with perfect impunity. They were so thoroughly and systematically organized that, with all the care and vigilance of the settlers of Montana, as well as some of the Indians—aided by the most experienced scouts and mountaineers—they were unable to reach their rendezvous, known to be somewhere about the base of the Tetons.

Many a brave scout had started out to follow these villains to their lair, taking a trail made plain by the tracks of stolen stock, but if he ever got back at all, it was to report of a trail lost in the labyrinths of black defiles within the shadows of the Three Tetons.

But no one believed that all the outlaws of Northern Montana rendezvoused in Teton Basin. There was no doubt that the band had spies and agents right among the stockmen of the Yellowstone Valley, and the valleys of its tributaries, whom it was more difficult to detect than it was to catch the operators.

It has been estimated that, during the year of 1884, two thousand horses were stolen in Montana alone by these Teton Basin outlaws, under the leadership of the notorious Jack Hart*—also known as "Seven-up"—and one Windy Campbell. It is supposed that they ran the stock southward from the Basin and sold them in Colorado, New Mexico and Utah.

Of the general history of this outlaw band, however, we have nothing in particular to do, and will now conduct the reader into the Teton Basin—the outlaw retreat—without attempting to describe the tedious and perilous passage by which we gain admittance.

It was mid-afternoon. The shadows of the great Shark's Tooth was slowly creeping eastward across the range, when, from the wooded spur of the environing hills on the northern extremity of the Basin, two persons looked down into the smiling valley upon the homes of the outlaw band. These two persons were Highland Harry, the Wizard Rifleman, and Ajax, the Infant Giant.

After two days and nights of almost constant creeping and climbing among the hills, suffering many a bruise from falls, deprived of both food and water, these two brave and determined young mountaineers had at last penetrated the robbers' stronghold undetected, having left their old friends, Uncle Bildad and Spokane, far back in the mountains to watch a certain pass leading in the direction of the Basin.

From their elevation the scouts could overlook almost the entire valley and see the outlaws' homes. The latter consisted of about a score of single and double log cabins, all of which stood at the edge of the timber skirting the valley. Most of the buildings were grouped together at a point two miles or more away, but at a point about half that distance stood three cabins within a short distance of each other. Besides these, there were two or three buildings standing off entirely alone. On the tallest building of the larger group some kind of a flag was fluttering, and this was evidence to the young scouts of that building being the headquarters of the band.

Many cattle and hundreds of horses could be seen scattered over the green, grassy vale, while nearer the cabins were fields of growing grain and small patches of vegetables.

Not a person could be seen moving abroad in the valley, but in and around the larger group of cabins considerable activity seemed to prevail. Many men, and even women and children, could be seen moving and fitting about; and finally, from the three cabins nearest to the

* This incident is substantially true.

* This outlaw was captured finally in 1886.

watchers, four men, two women and three children were seen to emerge and proceed on foot down to headquarters.

"I say, Ajax," Highland Harry finally observed, as they watched the movements of the outlaws, "there must be something unusual going on in Robberville to-day—perhaps a funeral or wedding."

"It may be they're havin' church, Death-Pop," replied Ajax, with a grim smile; "you seem to forget that to-day is Sunday, my dear friend."

"It is, indeed," responded Harry; "I'd overlooked that fact, so hungry and busy have I been the past twenty-four hours. I have always made it a point, Ajax, to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy when possible to do so. I do not think them outlaws have any religious scruples."

"Well, Harry," replied Ajax, "I go on the principle that the better the day the better the deed, and as I'm hollow from skull to moccasins, I think it would be doing the Wizard Rifleman and Infant Giant a great deed of kindness and mercy for us to flutter down to their nearest cabins and inspect their pantries. I feel pretty sure the folks have all gone down to headquarters, and if so, we could just make the cold grub fly."

"Well, one thing is certain," declared Highland Harry, "and that is, we have got to have something to eat before we can do anything more. As we dare not fire a gun to procure it, nor light a fire to cook anything if we even had it, I second your motion to move on them three cabins, and, if the folks are from home, help ourselves."

"That's the talk—motion's carried—come on, Death-Pop."

Descending the hill the scouts carefully approached the cabins, keeping well under cover of the timber. They found the houses all fronted south, the doors of two of them being closed, but the door of the third one—a long, double structure—stood open, leaving no doubt of there being some one inside.

However, the scouts were not to be thwarted in their intentions of procuring something to eat. They changed their position in hopes of determining, before they advanced from cover, whether an outlaw or his wife, or both, was in the double cabin, and in doing so they got the wind—a soft breeze—directly from the cabin, and it came freighted with the most delicious, savory odor that ever greeted the olfactories of a hungry man. It was the odor of cooking viands, and Ajax, after sniffing the air like a buck, his big, oblique eyes half-closed, exclaimed:

"Essence and incense of Paradise! do you catch on to that soul-tickling odor, Death-Pop? Does your nasal nose drink in that intoxicating odor as a reservation buck Ingin drinks in the juices of the golden maize? Does not—"

"Yes, the odor of cooking food," interrupted Harry, "and it only increases my gnawing hunger."

"Then come on," said the giant mountaineer, "and we'll have some of the solids as well as some of the ethereals."

Advancing from the belt of woods into the opening the two hastily approached the open door of the long cabin, their hands upon their pistols ready for quick work if necessary.

Without the least ceremony they bolted right into the room, and were greeted by a startled cry from the lips of a fat negress of forty years, the only occupant of the house. As the woman started back, her hands elevated and her face the picture of terror, Highland Harry said, in an assuring tone:

"Don't be frightened, Auntie, don't be frightened."

"Fore God, who is you?" the wench found voice to inquire, her eyes fairly bulging from their sockets.

"Friends—the best of friends," he answered.

"My frien?" exclaimed the woman; "dat big, ugly man my frien? 'Fore God I believ' he de dibbil!"

"Nary devil, Auntie," put in Ajax; "but, say, where's all yer men folks?"

"Dey down to Cap'n Hart's. If you want to see dem you haf to go down dar," promptly answered the negress, in hopes of getting rid of her unwelcome visitors.

"All right, Auntie, but we want something to eat," Ajax said. "I'll swear I'm hungry enough to eat a fat, plump nigger wench without salt!"

"G'long off! Got nothin' for you!" the negress replied, having somewhat recovered from her fright, and assumed an air of pugnacity.

"See here, nigger," Ajax exclaimed, a little sharply, "you don't want to get peart now, and go to yarnin'. You've got a whole orphan's supper of good things to eat, for I smelt them fourteen miles away, and tracked them up as a buzzard tracketh a carrion. What you got in that other room, Auntie?"

Advancing, he looked into the adjoining room, and a cry of genuine surprise burst from his lips at what he saw. A long table stood at one side of the room spread with snowy linen, and laden with a varie y of therich viands that would have done credit to a royal feast. A dozen plates were already laid, a camp-kettle of steaming coffeesat on the hearth of the open fireplace, and in fact everything seemed present and ready for a splendid feast except the feasters themselves.

"Great gods of Ambrosia!" burst from the lips of the astonished Ajax. "Highland Harry, come here and behold the feast that awaits us!—a feast that would knock the socks off old Bels-hazzar. Boy, hav'n't we struck it gorg'ous? Ar'n't we in the land of milk and honey? Who wouldn't be a Teton Basiner? Oh, Auntie! you sublime old girl, I love you from the bottom of my howling appetite! Come, Death-Pop, and let's dine to the health of our dear, old Auntie!"

"Jus' so suah as you tech one ob dem wittals, I'll blow de horn and bring all de men up here, and dey'll kill you plum dead," the old woman threatened, her eyes flashing fiercely.

"Auntie!" sharply exclaimed Ajax, turning upon the wench with a ferocious look, "if you do anything of the kind I'll devour you alive!"

This threat was followed by a savage grimace, a snapping of his jaws like a wolf, and the grating of his teeth in a manner that struck terror to the soul of the negress, who, with a hysterical cry, sunk back upon a chair trembling in every limb.

Having thus silenced the woman, Ajax turned and seated himself at the table, Highland Harry taking a seat opposite him.

Drawing his long-bladed hunting-knife, the Infant Giant thrust the point into a chunk of uncarved roasted meat, which he held up before him, and eying it steadily, slowly said:

"Some ha' meat that canna eat,
Some ha' none that want it;
But we ha' meat and wa'ca' eat,
So let the Lord be thankit!"

Having thus, in the language of the poet, expressed his thanks, the Giant fell to and helped himself as freely as though seated at his own board. Harry, too, made good use of his opportunity, however ruthlessly it was gained, for he considered that, since he was half starved and in the house of the enemy, the end justified the means.

The negress sat trembling in whimpering terror and saw her daintiest viands disappearing with a rapidity that threatened the total destruction of the feast. And, presently, when she saw Ajax lift a cloth from a plate, revealing a large fancy cake, and saw the ugly knife of the mountaineer cleave it in halves—one of which was tossed to Harry—the negress's heart seemed broken, and she wailed out in most lugubrious tones:

"Oh, poor massa! his weddin' supper's done ruined!"

"Wedding supper, eh?" exclaimed the Giant; "then you can sing that old familiar song of our childhood, 'Oh, what shall the wedding supper be, and a-who?'"

"And this is your master's wedding supper, is it, Auntie?" Highland Harry asked.

"In co'se it am massa's weddin' supper, and you's done gone and ruined it!"

"Why didn't you tell us before?" responded Ajax, with an assumed look of regret. "Then you're expecting the weddin' party here soon, are you?"

"Ebberry minit," answered the shrewd wench; "massa war to be married at de captin's house dis af'ernoon, and den he and his bride and de odder folks war comin' heah to suppah."

As if struck by a sudden thought, Highland Harry started slightly, and leaning forward, asked:

"What is your master's name, Auntie?"

"Massa's name am Hank Seguin."

"And what is the name of the woman he was to marry?"

"I do'sn't know; she young missus dat come frumb 'way off som'whar."

Harry and Ajax exchanged significant glances.

"Death-Pop," exclaimed the Infant Giant, "do you begin to understand the situation?"

"My God! yes! Kitty Boyne lives, and is the bride ere this of that villain and outlaw, Hank Seguin!"

CHAPTER X.

A WARM RECEPTION.

HIGHLAND HARRY now had little taste for more food and at once quit the table, distressed in heart and mind by the discovery he believed they had made—that Kitty Boyne lived and was wedded to Hank Seguin, the outlaw.

The young rifleman had become reconciled to Kitty's death, for, after Bruiser Bill had told him of her dying from effects of his bullet, he believed the story true; and now, in his heart of hearts, hoped it was true, rather than that she had been alive and the victim of Seguin.

Seating himself near the negress Harry plied her with questions, and thereby elicited sufficient evidence to satisfy him that Kitty had never even been wounded by his bullet, but had been brought to Teton Basin, as arranged by the pigeon-message of "Bat," and forced into a mock marriage with the outlaw.

"Ajax," the youth finally said, turning to his big companion, "it begins to look as though we had work to do in Teton Basin."

"That's what I'm wastin' 'way to a skeleton for," responded the Giant; "havin' sumptuously dined on the choice food prepared by our dear, magnificent, old Auntie, I am ready for business. Any weddin' that's taken place in Teton Basin to-day is a fraud and a humbug, and I now convene myself as a court—judge and jury—to grant Miss Kitty a divorce, if the bride be Kitty, before ever that delectable Seguin tastes of his wedding-supper."

"Fore God, dar am't a taste ob de suppah left!" declared the old negress with a woeful glance at the ravaged table.

"There'll be enough for somebody, Auntie, if things prove to be as we suspect—ah! Merry Moses! there they come this blessed moment, oh! so gay and happy!"

"Bress de Lor!" cried the negress starting toward the door, "I guess you'll catch it now!"

"Hold on, old gal," said Ajax, grasping her by the arm; "you don't want to go cuttin' any nigger shins 'round here. You stay right inside this cabin, and if you so much as chirp I'll snap your woolly head right off. Git, now, into that room, and don't offer to come out or whisper. Do you hear?"

As the Giant concluded he gave her one of his ferocious looks, grating his teeth as he did so, that sent the terrified wench reeling back into the dining-room begging that her life might be spared and promising implicit obedience.

The young mountaineers could see no less than fifteen or twenty persons—all men—stringing out on foot and horseback from headquarters. Of the horsemen there were six riding in pairs, one of the two riding before being a woman.

Keeping within the cabin, the scouts watched the approaching party with rapidly-beating hearts and no little apprehension, for they were running a desperate risk.

"The odds will be strong against us, Ajax," Highland Harry remarked.

"But we'll have a huge advantage, Death-Pop," responded the Giant. "You see the horsemen will reach here in advance of the footmen; we can demolish them, take the bride and flee to the mountains of Hepsidam before the others get near."

"Suppose our suspicion of the woman being Kitty should be incorrect?"

"We'll give them horsemen a whirl anyhow. If Seguin is among them I'd like to bat him one over the cranium for luck. We'll have to down them fellers on horseback, you see, in order to give ourselves a chance to get out."

Harry kept a close watch upon the couple riding in front, and when they were about ten rods from the cabin he turned to Ajax and, with a look half-joy, half-regret, said:

"It is Kitty Boyne, sure enough!"

"Good!" exclaimed the Giant, feeling that his weapons were in their proper place; "then I can slosh around all the more destructive among them varlets, seein' a pretty girl's life is at stake. I'm ready for work, Death-Pop."

"For Heaven's sake, Ajax, be very careful. One misslick may lose us all. We're in the tiger's den, and it is going to require the best of luck for us to get out. Ah! poor Kitty! I can see she is bowed down with grief and fear!"

Seguin and the maiden reached the cabin a few rods in advance of the others, and leaping from his saddle the outlaw assisted Kitty to dismount.

Hank Seguin was a tall, slender man of thirty-five years, with a dark-gray eye, a heavy, black mustache, and a swarthy, sensual visage. He was neatly attired, and, if armed at all, his weapons were not visible.

Kitty was a maiden of eighteen, with a slight,

graceful figure, deep-blue eyes and a wealth of dark-brown hair. Her fair, sweet face, Harry could see from his lookout, did not wear its wonted expression of happiness and smiles of vivacious joy. On the contrary, he saw it was marked with dejection and hopeless despair, and when Seguin took her by the arm and started toward the cabin, she drew back and a wild look of terror came into her eyes, as if she had suddenly read over that door the inscription over the entrance to Dante's Inferno—

"He who enters here leaves Hope behind!"

CHAPTER XI.

LOST AMONG THE FOOTHILLS.

It suddenly became evident to the young mountaineers that, owing to the order of the mounted outlaws' arrival, Seguin with the maiden would enter the cabin at least a minute or two in advance of the others, when all had been expected together and arrangements for their reception made accordingly. But a change in the scouts' plans was necessary, and Harry quickly said to his companion:

"Ajax, you must settle that villain, Seguin, with a thump on the head! If we fire the shot will alarm the others and they will come prepared."

Ajax winked a significant reply.

Half-dragging the poor, terrified girl, Seguin entered the door, shouting forth:

"Ho, Maggy! come greet your young mistress and welcome her home to—"

Here the outlaw's remarks were cut short by a voice saying:

"I'll welcome you!" and at the same instant the Titan form of Ajax slipped from behind the door, and before the outlaw could utter a single syllable, he received a blow on the head that felled him senseless and bleeding to the floor.

At the same instant Highland Harry made his presence known to Kitty, who uttered a cry of joy and surprise, and with outstretched hands started toward him, but fell in a swoon at his feet.

A little later Ajax opened the hall in earnest by shooting down an outlaw as he crossed the threshold of the cabin door.

At the crack of his big navy old Maggy, the negress, opened up a pair of lungs that would have done credit to a "painter."

A second shot from Ajax's revolver quickly followed the first. Then there was a momentary silence—except the wench's shrieks—during which time the Giant, followed by Highland Harry, sprung out into the yard and opened fire on the other three outlaws, who, alarmed by the report of Ajax's revolver, were hurrying toward the cabin, little dreaming of the presence of enemies therein.

Taken completely by surprise two of them fell at the first fire. The third one dodged behind a horse, and throwing his arm over the animal's back began a random firing at the scouts. But a shot in each of his exposed legs brought him down and he cried for mercy.

The sound and sight of the conflict had created a panic among those coming on foot. Some of them halted and gazed toward the cabin, gesticulating excitedly, while others turned and ran like deer toward headquarters.

Harry and Ajax were about turning to the cabin again when the door was banged shut and they found themselves barred out.

Instantly the thought flashed through their minds that Seguin had recovered his senses and closed the door upon them. Harry tried to open it, but it was fastened. With a curse Ajax hurled himself against it like a thunderbolt, and with a crash it was bursted from its hinges and flung half-across the room, falling upon the prostrate form of old Maggy, the negress.

Seguin still lay upon the floor unconscious, as did Kitty, also. The closing and barring of the door had been the work of the frantic, terrified wench, but she had paid dearly for it.

Ajax turned and went out of the cabin again to watch the movements of the enemy.

Highland Harry lifted the form of Kitty, and placing it on a couch near, endeavored to restore her to consciousness. While thus engaged, Ajax hurriedly entered the room, saying:

"Death-Pop, we've got to get out of this instant! The whole Teton Basin has been aroused, and no less than a dozen men on horseback are flying up the valley like the wind, while a score of others are comin' on foot!"

"Ajax, I can never leave this poor, unconscious girl here alive—"

"No, never!" interrupted the Giant; "by the throne of mercy! we'll take her with us! I can carry her, Harry, and then tax your speed to keep up." And as he concluded, he stooped and lifted the inanimate form of the girl in his arms

as though that of an infant, and turning, hurried from the cabin, followed by his friend.

"Now, Harry," he said, as he saw the outlaws swiftly approaching, "you must hump yourself and cover our retreat. See that your reputation as a Wizard Rifleman is fully sustained. If we can reach the hill we can make good our escape."

"Go on, Ajax, and I will do my best," said the young rifleman, with a calm yet determined air, dropping his repeater into the hollow of his left arm.

The Giant, with long, rapid strides, crossed the open space and entered the fringe of timber, Harry following slowly; but at the edge of the grove, the latter stopped, turned, and raising his trusty rifle, took a quick aim and fired at the foremost of the approaching horsemen, who was now scarcely thirty rods away. It was an easy shot for the Wizard Rifleman, and the outlaw fairly sprung into the air from his saddle, then fell to the earth.

The report of his rifle was immediately followed by the sharp twanging of a horn, whose blasts seemed to pierce the very heavens and roar and rattle among the mountains in a thousand reverberating echoes.

Glancing toward the cabin, as he turned to flee, Harry saw old Maggy in front of the building with a hunter's tin horn to her lips, her whole fat body seeming inflated to bursting in her frantic efforts to arouse the valley.

But the sounds of the conflict at the cabin had done that, already. The approaching outlaws required no words, nor signal-blasts of the horn, to inform them of the presence of enemies in their stronghold. In fact, they had seen the mountaineers leaving the cabin for the woods, and most of them dashed on past the door in pursuit.

Highland Harry ran on until he came up with Ajax, then he stopped and looked back. He saw the enemy following through the timber, and tried a second shot at one of them; but with what result he could not tell, for the shadows of the woods, and the many tree-trunks, made a careful aim impossible.

"If we can keep them off half an hour, Death-Pop," said Ajax, hopefully, "the gathering shadows of night'll help us out."

To make more certain of his work Harry permitted the outlaws to gain slightly upon him, for as long as they remained upon their horses, he had little fear of their doing much harm with firearms. The result was that the next shot he fired an outlaw was tumbled from his saddle, and a second and third soon shared the same fate.

This fatality in the ranks of the robbers ended their pursuit for the time being, and Highland Harry was once more permitted to turn about and continue after his friends. But to his surprise Ajax could not be seen. Of this, however, he thought little at the time, for as the timber was growing denser, the shadows deeper and the way breaking up into foothills, it seemed that the young Giant could not be far away although concealed from his view; and, nothing daunted, he ran on, expecting every moment to overtake him. But in this he was disappointed. A mile or more had been traversed. The way had grown broken and hilly; the shadows had deepened into the darkness of night, and the youth at last realized, with a feeling of bitter regret, that he was not only separated from his big companion, but lost among the foothills of Teton Basin!

CHAPTER XII.

A BAND OF WROTHY MEN.

AMONG the very first of the gang to reach Seguin's cabin was Jack Hart, or "Seven-Up," the leader of the band. The villain was almost paralyzed by the shocking sight that met his gaze outside the building, and the story he heard from the lips of old Maggy and the man who had been shot in the legs.

Hank Seguin was slowly recovering from his "quiet," although he was still in too dazed a condition to give any information regarding the situation. His face was covered with blood from a gash on the head, and he presented a rather dilapidated appearance for a bridegroom.

As soon as Hart learned what had happened he became somewhat excited and tore around most furiously.

"This all comes," he exclaimed, to his followers, arriving on the ground, "of that infernal, stupid blunder of 'Flip' Jim's party with Old Plenty Cows in Snake Canyon! That big devil, Ajax, who was with the Crows at the time of the attack, has boldly and deliberately followed 'Flip's' party into the Basin. But it's no use whinin' now over that. Enemies are in

camp and they must not be permitted to escape."

"What's your pleasure, captain?" asked one Adder-Nose Dick—a very appropriate name—whose duty it was to keep the Basin clear of enemies—a sort of captain of guards.

"Mount and go at once for the dogs, and we'll trail them assassins to the Gallatin but what we get them! Ride lively, man, for the trail should be taken up before it gets too dark."

Away dashed Adder-Nose, and in less than half an hour returned, bringing with him four Cuban bloodhounds—fierce, impatient and hungry-looking brutes, that seemed to know what was before them.

A party of four was selected to accompany Adder-Nose, Bruiser Bill and Yakima Jule being of that number by their own request. They were eager to get even with Highland Harry and Ajax for the punishment they had received at the hands of these young mountaineers.

By this time it was growing dusk, and as night soon comes in the mountain valleys after sunset, Adder-Nose and his party made haste to find the trail of the enemy, and soon they were speeding away toward the north.

Owing to the gathering shadows they kept the hounds in leash, and after a few miles' pursuit it was discovered to them by the action of the dogs that the trail separated.

"By the everlasting fury!" complained Adder-Nose, "them two interlopers have parted, and there's no tellin' which one has the gal. We daren't divide our force for fear of a trap. Them two fellows may only be a bait thrown into the Basin to draw us all into ambush; they never entered here alone."

"Well, what'll we do?" asked Bruiser Bill, impatiently.

"Some one will have to return to quarters and inform 'Seven-Up' of the situation, and suggest he send a party to Smoke-Hole, Black Gut and Shiver Canyons to watch for the fugitives. We'll wait here until he returns with further orders to us."

Yakima Jule volunteered to return to camp and no less than three hours were thus lost, for when he returned it was with the information that parties had already been dispatched to watch the northern passes leading from the Basin.

"Good!" exclaimed Bruiser Bill on receipt of this news, "then we're sure of the capture of them bold marauders and the recovery of Seguin's bride. On, Adder-Nose, with your pups! Let us sleep nor rest not until the scalp of Ajax dangles like a cow-skin at my girdle!"

"And I have paralyzed the Wizard Rifleman!" chimed in Yakima, with a vivid recollection of his recent adventures at Devil's Trap. "And then, there are them two old hunters who are no doubt with them young coyotes before this; so I want to proclaim right now that we'll have no boy's play downin' them four even if they are alone."

"Well," said Adder-Nose, "we'll not borrow any fear in advance of possible danger. We've got the two separated, and if we can keep them so until we rake them in, as we have a dozen others that war foolhardy enough to venture into Teton Basin, it's not likely another attempt will be made soon to disturb our retreat. Come, forward to the pursuit!"

Taking the trail that trended off to the northeast the outlaws pressed on through the night, over wooded hills, rocky valleys—tireless, determined and revengeful.

CHAPTER XIII.

A REVELATION BY DAVID HANOVER.

ON the morning following the meeting at Red Bar the settlers were still in a fever of excitement over the disappearance of Kitty Boyne, and the cowardly assault upon the life of Highland Harry.

The most careful search of the ground where the maiden was captured, and the adjacent hills, gave no light as to whether the captive had been killed by Harry's bullet or not. But the fact of their being unable to find any traces of her, living or dead, taken in connection with the well-matured plans for her abduction—as revealed by the intercepted message of the carrier-pigeon—gave some hope of her being alive; and so Highland Harry and Uncle Bildad at once set off in the direction of Teton Basin to obtain any information possible.

That the outlaw had a confederate in Red Bar there seemed no doubt, but among all the men there was not a single one upon whom suspicion could be fixed with any reasonable grounds. There were those, however, who could not help associating the presence of David

Hanover with the abduction of Kitty Boyne, and would no doubt have suspected him of the attempt on Highland Harry's life had the stranger, at the time of the attack, not been seated in the school-house in conversation with half a dozen citizens. A watch was kept upon his movements nevertheless. He seemed restless and uneasy, and finally wandered off alone in the direction of Bill Boyne's cabin, and was gone some time. This movement caused no little suspicion in the minds of those who had, hitherto, being well disposed toward the stranger who, apparently unconscious of it all, finally sought out Captain Dalton and Judge Kinney and said:

"Captain, I want a private talk with you and the judge."

The three retired to a secluded spot and having seated themselves, Hanover asked:

"Have you gentlemen any suspicion of who the enemy is in your midst?"

"Not the least," answered Dalton and Kinney.

"I believe I can give you a strong clew," said Hanover.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dalton.

"Has it never occurred to you that William Boyne might be the man?"

"Never!" exclaimed the judge.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the captain, in a tone of refutation. "It would be an unnatural father, indeed, that would betray his child into the hands of cut-throats and murderers. What do you base your suspicions upon, Mr. Hanover?"

"Well, it is evident to you," said Mr. Hanover, "that there is, or has been, an outlaw spy in your midst. There can be little doubt but that same person sent that message by the homing pigeon killed by Highland Harry. That message conveyed the intelligence that a certain individual was in the Gallatin headed toward Red Bar, and urged immediate action on the part of one Seguin in abducting Kitty Boyne. Now, gentlemen, from what I have seen and know, I am well convinced that I am the man referred to in the message as approaching Red Bar."

"You, then, are the man Raymond whom the message said was upon Grimm's trail?" exclaimed Dalton; "but who is Grimm? and what has your appearance here to do with Stony Boyne and the abduction of Kitty?"

"I do not believe Kitty is Boyne's daughter!" declared Hanover, in an emphatic tone.

"You talk in riddles, Hanover," said Dalton, impatiently; "you do not give any grounds for your assertions, not a single reason, sir."

"I'll come to that in due course of time," replied Hanover; "and will say now that I believe Boyne sent the message intercepted by Harry."

"That's impossible, sir," declared Kinney, emphatically. "In the first place, he had no pigeons—"

"That you know of," interrupted Hanover.

"We would surely have known it if he'd had any birds about his place."

"He could have kept them concealed. Those pigeons were doubtless bred in the Teton Basin by the outlaws and conveyed here, and elsewhere imprisoned, and kept so until it was necessary to send a message to the Basin. It is a very clever and safe means of communication. But now I want to tell you that a while ago I was secreted near Boyne's cabin watching movements thereabouts, and, while so doing, I saw no less than three white pigeons fly out of the door of Boyne's cabin and take their course southward on rapid wing."

"Good mercy! is that possible?" exclaimed the astonished judge.

"It's true as Holy Writ," Hanover went on; "they may have carried messages from Red Bar; but one thing in my mind is certain, and that is, that Boyne had become uneasy and released the birds through fear of being caught with them in his possession. There may still be other birds there, but whether there are or not, the place of their concealment in the house, or about it, can be found. He may have kept them in the loft of his cabin, or about his stable, or even in the grove, and that, too, unknown to Kitty or any one but himself."

"Furthermore, it is evident to my mind that if Boyne is an outlaw-confederate here, he is the very man that endeavored to kill Highland Harry last night. He must have had his suspicions aroused as to Harry's secret, and creeping to the window under cover of the darkness fired the almost fatal shot. True, Boyne was among the first to congratulate Harry on his escape from death; but then, that was only the blind of a clever villain."

"Well, this is astounding news!" declared the judge, "and if it was not easy of proof I could scarcely credit it. Let us go at once to Boyne's cabin and investigate matters there. But what puzzles me is as to why Stony Boyne should plot and plan with the Outlaws of Teton Basin for the abduction of his own daughter."

"As I have said before," David Hanover observed, "I do not believe she is his child. I have every reason to believe that Kitty Boyne, as you know her, is my own daughter!"

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

CAPTAIN DALTON and Judge Kinney were astounded, almost, by David Hanover's declarations; they saw at once that there was some secret connected with his visit to Red Bar—a secret which, reaching back through years, had traced the lines of mental pain upon his face.

"Mr. Hanover," Captain Dalton finally said, "I see now you know more of 'Stony' Boyne than you have been willing to confess."

"I know little of him, captain—less, perhaps, than you. I never met him until last night; but his allusion to Raymond in that message—that is, if he sent it—leads me to know, almost beyond a doubt, that Kitty is not his daughter."

"Then your name is not Hanover, but Raymond," said the judge.

"David Raymond is my true name, gentlemen; and now I'd as well tell you all the rest, which is a bit of a secret. Nearly eighteen years ago my beloved wife died, leaving a baby girl two weeks of age. Having no relatives near I placed the child in the care of one Mrs. Kemp, who had a girl baby of about the same age as my own. Business took me from home, and I was away over two years. During my absence the Kemps moved into an adjoining State. I had had no correspondence with them, and judge of my bitter disappointment and grief on reaching home, to learn that my baby was dead. I visited the Kemps and found the story true, although I remarked to myself at the time that Mrs. Kemp's baby bore a little resemblance to my dead wife. I did not, however, mistrust the least deception, for the Kemps had always borne the reputation of upright, Christian people. But the fact of it is, it was the Kemps' baby that had died, and they having become so devotedly attached to my child, and fearing I might take her from them, resorted to falsehood and deception to keep her."

"A year passed by. The Kemps moved to the Far West, and there Kemp died. A year later Mrs. Kemp married a man named Grimm—a fur-trader. The baby was then less than four years old."

"Twelve years rolled around. An entomologist, named Simon Plunkett, was wandering in quest of 'bugs' through the valley of the Upper Yellowstone. One day he ran across a log cabin in a sequestered spot about five miles from the nearest settlement. As he neared the building he heard groans issuing therefrom and saw a trail of blood crossing the threshold."

"Advancing to the door, Plunkett looked in. A woman of forty years lay upon a couch bleeding to death from a wound in the breast. She was alone. Plunkett entered the cabin and kindly offered his services to the suffering woman. From her he soon learned that her husband was off hunting in the hills, and her daughter gone to the Agency for some supplies. In attempting to shoot a wolf that had boldly, and in open day, ventured within a few rods of the cabin she had accidentally shot herself, inflicting a mortal wound."

"Simon Plunkett offered to go for assistance, but the woman bade him stay by her. She was sinking fast and knew she had but a short time to live. She wished to make a dying statement. Plunkett seated himself, and taking out his note-book wrote down her confession, word for word as she made it."

"She confessed that her daughter, Theresa, was not her child, but that of one David Raymond of —, Ohio—that she had deceived Raymond as to the death of his child that she might keep her. She admitted that Ashley Grimm, her husband, knew not but that Theresa was her own child by her first husband, Joel Kemp; and that she and Grimm had both kept from the maiden the fact of her being other than Grimm's child. So you see the girl was ignorant of the fact that she was the own child of neither, and Grimm ignorant of the fact that she was not the child of his wife."

"To Plunkett she confessed that Theresa was the daughter of David Raymond. She, also, admitted that one other person knew that Theresa was not her child. That person was a

woman whose name Plunkett could not remember—a sister of Joel Kemp's."

"I thought you said Plunkett wrote down her confession," Captain Dalton remarked.

"He did," the narrator went on, "and I'll soon explain that seeming inconsistency. About the time Mrs. Grimm had completed her confession a young man of prepossessing appearance entered the cabin. He gave his name to Plunkett as Henry Seguin. He seemed well acquainted with Mrs. Grimm, and was deeply moved by her serious condition. Plunkett mistrusted at once that he was an admirer of the maid, Theresa, by the way he spoke of her, and his apparent sadness over Mrs. Grimm's suffering."

"The situation was briefly explained to Seguin, and then, by the woman's request, Plunkett read over to him her revelation, that he—Seguin—as well as Plunkett, might be a witness to it. She exacted a promise of Plunkett that he would deliver her confession to Raymond, and ask him to forgive her of her crime as he hoped for Heaven's mercy. Seguin she requested to break the news to Theresa should she die before the maid returned. She, also, asked him to tell her husband all, and that it was her dying wish that he do all in his power to restore the girl to her rightful father, feeling sure that David Raymond, who was a very wealthy man, would reward him well."

"Well, the poor woman died before either husband or daughter returned, and Plunkett, eager to reach a given point by a certain time, took his departure with the confession signed by Mrs. Grimm, and bearing the names of Simon Plunkett and Henry Seguin as witnesses."

"Four days later when away south in the heart of the mountains Plunkett was suddenly confronted by a strange man who demanded of him Mrs. Grimm's confession. For a moment the bug-hunter was confused, but being a plucky fellow of quick perception, he promptly refused the stranger's request. The latter attempted to draw his revolver to enforce his demands, but quick as a wink Plunkett struck him in the face a terrific blow, knocking him over a low embankment. Then the naturalist turned and fled. He had gone but a short distance when a pistol rung out and a bullet cut uncomfortably close to his ear. Looking in the direction whence the shot came, he saw a man, whom he recognized at a glance as Henry Seguin, standing on the opposite side of a deep chasm, in the act of firing a second shot at him."

"Dodging behind a rock, he escaped the bullet, then he took to his heels and ran for his life; for in an instant it flashed through his brain that the first man was Grimm, and that he not only wanted to recover his wife's confession, but intended to kill him, that the secret of Theresa's birth, for some reason or other, might be kept a secret."

"Plunkett had not gone far before he discovered that he was being followed by the two men, and not knowing but what he might be killed, he determined they should never have the confession. So from one of the two pouches he carried he took a long, wide-mouthed bottle, emptied it of its contents of alcohol and bugs, placed the woman's confession therein, and, when certain his pursuers were not in sight, concealed it in the crevice of a rock. He marked the location in his mind as well as circumstances would admit, expecting, if he escaped, to return and secure it without any difficulty."

"Well, he escaped his pursuers, and, eager to get even with them, he did not go back to get the bottle; but trusting to his memory, he hastened to Ohio, and finding me, revealed all he remembered of the confession; and there was only one thing he had forgotten, and that was the name of the woman who knew of the Kemps' deception regarding the child."

"Forthwith Plunkett and I started for the Yellowstone country, but to our bitter disappointment, we found, on our arrival there, that Grimm and his daughter had gone from their secluded home—where, no one knew. What to do we scarcely knew. You see Plunkett had seen neither Grimm nor Theresa at the cabin, or elsewhere, and only took it for granted that the masked stranger, who had demanded of him the confession in the hills, was Grimm. So, of course, the man could have changed his location and name, and thereby elude detection for a time, at least."

"Determined not to be defeated, Plunkett changed his calling to that of a detective, and started out to hunt Grimm down. A few months ago he visited Red Bar and at once fixed upon 'Stony' Boyne as his man Grimm; and

since Highland Harry revealed the secret of that message, it is pretty clear that Plunkett hit the right fellow. It is also clear that my movements are being watched closely, and that my coming here has aroused Grimm and his confederate, Seguin, and hastened the abduction of Kitty. Plucky old Simon Plunkett is now over in the mountains, searching for his bottled papers; but I am afraid he will never recover them. To me it will not be material, but if Kitty Boyne is Theresa Grimm, and living, and is rescued from the enemy, she may require other evidence than mine and Plunkett's of her being my child. I dare say the secret of her birth has been kept from her for some reason or other, and the attempt on Plunkett's life was to hush the matter entirely."

"Well, this is a startler to us!" declared Judge Kinney; but before he could say more, a settler came hurrying up, saying excitedly:

"Captain—judge, Stony Boyne's cabin's all in flames!"

The three men sprung to their feet, and looking down the valley beheld the cabin, sure enough, wrapped in smoke and flame.

With one accord everybody hurried toward the fire, and when they arrived on the scene they found the cabin a pyramid of devouring flames. Stony Boyne was not present, nor could he be found about the premises. Captain Dalton ran to the horse-shed and found Kitty's pony gone. This he reported to his friends, when David Raymond, as we will hereafter know Hanover, said:

"Boyne has outwitted Plunkett and I, after all. That cabin was fired by his own hand to conceal some evidence of his guilt, while he has escaped to the hills—perchance followed his friend Seguin into Teton Basin. I have no doubt now but that those three pigeons I saw escape from the cabin bore messages of our doings here to the outlaws, and of the movements of Highland Harry and Uncle Bildad."

"If so, then the mountaineers will be waylaid and murdered," declared Judge Kinney.

"That is all very true," responded Raymond, "and we should do something to save them if possible. As they gave you the course they intended to pursue, they might be overtaken and warned of their peril. I, for one, am ready to take to the saddle forthwith."

"And here, too," said Captain Dalton. Then everybody present offered his services, but a company of five, with Dalton as leader, was organized, armed and equipped in a short time, and then mounting their horses pushed off into the mountains, little dreaming that some of them would never return alive to Red Bar.

CHAPTER XV. THE GAME SIGHTED.

"Hist! easy, men, for, by heavens! the game is in sight! Look away up yonder."

The speaker was the notorious outlaw, Adder-Nose Dick, who, accompanied by Bruiser Bill, Yakima Jule, and two others, had been sent with the bloodhounds in pursuit of Highland Harry and Ajax.

The outlaws stood in a wooded valley some miles beyond the utmost limits of Teton Basin, and as Adder-Nose lifted his finger and pointed up the mountain-side to the "game" they had been following, the faces of his friends lit up with a sinister, triumphant light.

Standing in a *cimmarou* path that wound around the steep mountain-side, they beheld the figure of a man in whom they recognized despite the distance—the Wizard Rifleman.

The young mountaineer was fully half a mile away. He was alone and stood upon a ledge at a point where the goat-path made an abrupt turn around the mountain. He seemed totally unconscious of the presence of the outlaws in the valley below, and stood leaning upon his rifle like one in deep mental reflections.

"That's a solid fact, Adder," replied Bruiser Bill, as he, too, fixed his eyes upon the dreaded young mountaineer; "now, if we let the dogs loose they'll soon be at his throttle. Oh! let 'em loose, let 'em loose!"

"Don't get excited, Bruiser," advised Adder-Nose; "you seem to forget that that boy on yonder ledge really seems to wear a charmed life. He is a long ways off—too far for us to expose ourselves to his view while he occupies the position he does. For, surer than the keen nose of old Romeo there is that fellow's aim, and if he ever draws a bead with his repeater on man or dog, man or dog will drop. We've got to steal up on him and then make a dash and take him by surprise."

"It are durned comical," said one Tony Batts, "that arter all our chargin' and snortin' through these hills with blood in our

eyes, and wild, old *destruction* in our hearts, that we—five men and four bloodhounds—darn't tackle one solitary boy arter we've got him in sight! Oh! it makes me weary-sick!"

"My impetuous Tony Batts," replied Adder-Nose, in a tone of sarcasm, "I'm sorry for you, and if you want to die a martyr, just you dash from covert and let that young Wizard see you. Enough of our men have fallen by his rifle without taking any further risks. He has defied our vigilance and entered Teton Basin and escaped, which no other enemy has ever done. There are those among our band who solemnly believe that his is a supernatural spirit; and there are more than one ready to swear that they've see'd him taken up bodily into the clouds that rolled like the curled front o' Jove about the mountain heights when close pressed by pursuers."

"That's all swash and cowardly superstition!" declared Batts in evident disgust.

"I think so, myself," said Adder-Nose, "but then, it is very true that he's been worse than an epidemic among our men. Every time that we have undertaken to catch or kill him, he has escaped to the hills. The highlands seem to be his element as water is a fish's. But now that we have him in sight, we want to go slow and cautious, for, no difference where he may hide, old Romeo's nose will search him out. We want to give him no chance to use his rifle, and then all the evil spirits this side of creation can't save his hide."

And thus the outlaws stood and conversed, fearing to expose themselves to the sight of the dreaded young foe. But finally Highland Harry turned and moved on up the trail and disappeared behind an angle in the cliff, and then the outlaws bounded forward, crossed the valley and began ascending the acclivity, still keeping their hounds in leash.

It required but a few minutes to reach the point where the young mountaineer had stood, and then Adder-Nose ordered the hounds turned loose.

It was not the first time that old Romeo had led a pack upon a human trail, and the moment he was liberated he bounded away with his nose to the ground, giving utterance to low, deep mouthings.

"Now, my gallant hearties, the ball has opened in dead earnest," said Adder-Nose, "and we must follow the music of the hounds at a double-quick step and be in at the death."

With these cheering words the outlaws dashed away after the dogs, following the goat-path that wound through clumps of stunted trees and bushes, over rocky ledges, and along the brink of gaping chasms—ever leading upward toward the clouds.

The voice of old Romeo could be easily heard in the clear, vibrant air, and Adder-Nose, who boasted of having hunted slaves with dogs in Brazilian forests, knew by the peculiar baying of the dogs that the animals were close upon the quarry.

"Forward, men, a little livelier," the ex-slave-hunter exclaimed, in a jubilant tone, his dark, cruel face aglow with brutal triumph, "the hounds are pressing the Wizard Rifleman close. Step lively, boys, if you would soon enjoy a thrilling sight, and—"

Boom—m—m—m!

It was the crash of a rifle that rolled down from the heights above and swept away through the hills in a rattling, roaring volley of echoes.

"He's at bay, by the eternals!" burst from Bruiser Bill's lips; "oh, my heart be still! and swifter fly my noble heels, that I may hear the Wizard's squeals!"

On with a renewed burst of speed the puffing outlaws bounded. Every moment they expected to come in sight of the dogs and fugitive. Their hopeful spirits ran high.

Suddenly Adder-Nose, who was in the lead, stopped still, a horrible oath bursting from his lips. Before him in the path lay one of the hounds stone-dead with a bullet-hole between his eyes.

The voice of old Romeo could be heard still some distance ahead.

The frantic execrations that fell from the lips of the enraged Adder-Nose were interrupted by a second report from the fugitive's rifle, and like startled demons the outlaws ran on up the path, to meet, finally, with a more maddening sight than ever. It was the lifeless body of old Romeo lying across the trail, while crouching near was a third dog tearing frantically with his paws at his nose that had been shattered, no doubt, by the same bullet that had slain Romeo.

The fourth hound was not in sight, but while the outlaws stood raving like very devils over

their loss, the dog came trotting down the path toward them, having given up the chase in disgust, if not in fear.

For fully ten minutes the outlaws seemed bereft of all sense, indulging in a general outburst of wild fury and rage. Suddenly, however, Adder-Nose recovered his reason, and starting off up the path called to his men:

"Come on, men! we're fools to stand here and blow our brains out talkin' and swearin'! Let us run that young devil down or die!"

Away they went as fast as their feet could carry them. A desire, new-born, for revenge had sprung up in their breasts and lent speed to their heels. But fate seemed to decide against them in every instance that day. They had gone less than half a mile when a man, rifle in hand, was seen standing on a rock some distance ahead of them, evidently waiting for them to come in sight. The space between them was open and clear, and the outlaws knew at a glance that it would be sure death to advance in the face of Highland Harry's deadly rifle; and so they came to an abrupt halt on the edge of a narrow yet deep chasm for another consultation.

"Boys," said Adder-Nose in a kind of a hopeless voice, "we are at the end of our rope. To advance further will be for that young hellyon to pick us off at his leisure!"

"Then this is the end of all our valiant raid of nearly twenty-four hours, is it?" queried Bruiser Bill in a half-sneering tone. "Oh, ye gods! how the mighty have fallen! We're no nearer catchin' that devilish Wizard than we war a week—a month—a year ago. But, boys, it makes me hot to see that tautalizin' impstandin' up there in sight, bold as a hull army. I've got just one thousand dollars salted down in the Basin as the profits of two years' labor, and I'd give every dollar of it at this minute if the man could be produced that could, from here, kill that impudent varlet that is—"

"So near, and yet so far, as the poie says."

It was a strange voice on the opposite side of the chasm that uttered these last words; and glancing quickly in the direction whence it came, the outlaws beheld, to their utmost astonishment, the figure of a little old man emerge cautiously from a clump of bushes and advance to the edge of the chasm, carrying in his hands at a trail a fine looking rifle. He might have been fifty years of age. His face was covered with a short, stubby beard. A pair of dark, squint eyes peered out from under the peak of an old cloth cap. His lithe, slightly-bent figure was clad in a garb of miscellaneous textures whose original colors were lost in an oblivion of dirt and grease.

The chasm being fully twenty feet wide it was impossible for the outlaws to approach nearer the stranger, and so Adder-Nose contented himself by demanding:

"Who in thunder are you?"

"I'm jist the pilgrim to take in that offer o' a thousand dollars, I just hear'n made," was the old man's reply, given in a shrill, cracked voice.

"Can you hit that feller yander?" asked Bruiser Bill.

"If I can't," responded the old man, "no one else need try. I don't take a back seat for even Highlan' Harry on the shoot. I'm not a wizard, but I'm a shooter, all the same."

"That is Highland Harry standing yonder," said Bruiser. "Shoot him down, and you shall have the thousand!"

"I don't care who the target is, nor who you be, so's I git the thousand," declared the old man, whose villainous cupidity seemed to overreach all conscientious scruples, providing he ever possessed any.

"Old man," said Adder-Nose, "that feller is eight or nine hundred yards away. You can't hit him."

"Not an inch over six hundred yards, stranger," asserted the old fellow, glancing in the direction of the man on the rock; "but if I miss it sha'n't cost you a durned cent."

"Then shoot!" commanded Bruiser Bill, impatiently.

"All right; here we go!" was the old chap's response, and adjusting the sights of his Winchester, he laid flat upon the ground, and resting the gun on a rock, took aim and fired.

The piece rung out like a cannon, and as the smoke drifted from before him, the old gunner, still lying on his stomach, craned his neck, inquiring:

"How is it? Did I down him?"

"You did, by the holy Moses!" cried Adder-Nose, as he saw the figure on the rock stagger and fall.

"Bully old marksman!" shouted Yakima Jule in glee.

"A miraculous shot!" declared Batts.
 "Grand old cuss!" proclaimed Bruiser Bill;
 "right nobly have you won yer thousand, and
 succeeded to the title o' Wizard Rifleman."

"Better run up and see where I put the bullet, strangers," suggested the old customer; "mebbe the critter's only wounded. I aimed for his belt so's an overshot or an undershot of a foot or so'd fetch him anyhow."

"All right, stranger!" said Adder-Nose; "and while we're gone, git over, if ye can, on this side o' the chasm, so's we can shake your paw and cultivate yer acquaintance. We love you as man was never loved before."

"I'm afeerd o' that dumb, ugly-looking dog that keeps up sich a yowlin' at me," the old man replied; "I don't want no hydropobia in my thousand dollars."

"Don't fear the hound, ole man," said Bruiser Bill; "we'll take keer of him. We'll be back in a few minutes with Highland Harry's head, I hope."

The outlaws all hurried away up the trail as if each one was determined to be the first to reach the hated foe's body.

The old man watched them until they were about forty rods away, then he threw off his old greasy coat, revealing a straight, supple figure clad in a neat-fitting hunter's jacket. Next he removed his cap and a head of light-brown hair was disclosed. His squint eyes opened wide and clear as a wild buck's; and when at last he removed his mask of stubby whiskers, a boyish face, radiant with a triumphant smile, was revealed. *It was the face of Highland Harry, the Wizard Rifleman!*

CHAPTER XVI.

HIGHLAND HARRY TAKEN OFF HIS GUARD.

"DELUDED mortals!" mused Highland Harry aloud, a habit peculiar to persons who live much of the time alone, "if you find any one dead up there it will be one of your own friends. Were I certain you had no other friends in these diggings, I'd open on you. Ha! ha! that disguise must have been perfect, though I was awfully afraid that dog would give me away, and—"

"Avaunt! throw up your hands or I'll plug you through, you deceptive varmint!"

It was a sharp, defiant and earnest voice that spoke thus, and turning about, Highland Harry found himself gazing into the black muzzles of a long double-barreled pistol, back of which stood a strange man, who evidently meant business.

He was a smooth-faced man of fifty or more years, rather under the medium in height, slender and slightly stooped-shouldered, with thin, sharp features, and keen, gray eyes that gleamed along the barrel of his pistol with a burning light. He was dressed in buckskin breeches and a short coat of gray jeans. On his head was a leather cap with a long, black peak. At either side, by means of straps, passing over his shoulders, hung a canvas bag.

Highland Harry was taken completely by surprise by this odd-looking old man whom he at once decided must be an outlaw, or an enemy, at least.

The pistol the man held leveled upon him was an ancient affair, and the face and form of its owner rather insignificant; but the eye that gleamed along the weapon told Harry that a fearless and resolute spirit confronted him.

The boy was too cautious to do aught that might provoke a shot, but maintaining his composure with a nerve and presence of mind decidedly remarkable for one who had just passed through an exciting ordeal, he calmly replied to the old man:

"Say, stranger, hav'n't you made a mistake? Please put down that double-nosed iron and let's compare notes."

"Oh, yes! you want to get the drop on me," replied the old man; "you're a slippery young fraud. I see'd yer whole performance with them five excited gentlemen, I was ambushed near when you stole them clothes and whiskers and put 'em on. Them's my goods."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Harry; "well, in dodging the outlaws I found them, and, not dreaming the owner was about, I put them on to trick the outlaws."

"Well, you did it, you scamp; I saw the hull proceedings, and it made my heart bleed to see how deceptive and demoralized are the youth of the land."

"Then you must be a missionary," Harry observed, facetiously.

"No, I'm no gospel mill, but I like uprightness in all children just the same. Now, them clothes are my Sunday suit. I left them by the rock and went off skirmishing for bugs, not

supposing they'd be mussed over by a boy's dirty hands. So you are Highland Harry, Popshot of the Mountains, and them five fellows are outlaws? Well, I am Simon Plunkett—Professor Simon Plunkett, entomologist—hunting up bug specimens for Brownsonian Institute. Highland, honor yourself by shaking Professor Plunkett's hand."

With this the old codger lowered his weapon and advanced with extended hand to Harry, his mouth wreathed with a pleasant smile and his keen eyes beaming with admiration.

But, despite this radical change in the man's conduct toward him, Harry was loth to accept it as entirely sincere. He had some misgivings as to the old fellow's reputed character. His vernacular, as well as his appearance, did not speak very forcibly of his being a scientist; and then the fact of his carrying a disguise in that region was strongly suspicious of deception.

The old fellow did not fail to notice the youth's hesitancy and distrust, and endeavored to set him at ease by taking from the bags at his side several small bottles, in which were various specimens of insects, and dilating in a very interesting way upon each different bug. But instead of winning Harry's confidence by this course, it only served to increase his suspicion. It suddenly occurred to him that the man might be talking to distract his attention so as to gain time, and determined to force an issue, he said:

"Friend Bugs, I enjoy listening to your talk about your collections, but I see them outlaws have reached the supposed fallen foe, and as he is one of their own friends, instead of Highland Harry, of course they are very wrothy, and already coming back this way hot as hornets; therefore it behooves me to be moving off at once."

"Shades of Diogenes!" exclaimed the old naturalist, "then that will leave me in a pickle if them varmints find me. I can never explain things satisfactory; therefore, if you've no objections, I'll go with you."

"All right, come along," replied Harry, starting off; "but I'm worse than a bug-hunter on the go, I can tell you."

"Don't worry 'bout my keeping in sight of you. I'm old, I know, in years, but nimble as a spring lamb on the tramp. Some two years ago I went flying down through these mountains like an inflated bladder in a flume, pursued by two varmints that I'd like the pleasure of bottling in alcohol for the Brownsonian Institute. But here we go, Highland Harry and Professor Simon Plunkett."

And away they did go, the old man keeping pace with Harry with the nimbleness of youth, all the while his tongue rattling away in facetious observations quite amusing to the young mountaineer.

All distrust of the professor had vanished from Harry's mind, and he had accepted the jolly and somewhat eccentric old man into full fellowship.

They traveled northward through the hills about five miles, then turned and bore eastward. Finally they came to the edge of a declivity that sloped abruptly down into a great canyon. It was entirely devoid of timber, but covered with a growth of sage-brush and other vegetation scarcely knee high. Its lower extremity was lost in the darkness of the canyon nearly five thousand feet below.

Down this declivity Highland Harry suggested they descend into the canyon.

"Woof!" exclaimed Professor Plunkett, with a shrug of the shoulders, "I can never make that, lad: I'd pitch headlong into the canyon. I can climb up a hill, or skin over the level, but I cannot climb downward. Can't we get around some way?"

"Yes," answered Harry, "but this would be a near cut, and—Hark!"

They listened. The report of a rifle and the sound of a conflict came up from the depths of the canyon.

"Fighting going on down there!" declared Plunkett.

"Yes," responded Highland Harry, buckling his belt tighter about him, "and a friend may be in need of my assistance. Plunkett, I hope we may meet soon again—good-by, I'm going to leave you."

Before the old entomologist could reply, the young mountaineer dashed away down the declivity. Plunkett grew almost dizzy as he watched the daring boy go bounding down the hillside, at times seeming to clear a hundred feet at a bound.

"My God! the wild boy'll be killed!" the old man exclaimed to himself.

Soon the boy disappeared from his view, and then with nervous footsteps he moved on along the brow of the hill. He could still hear the sound of battle below now growing louder, now fainter, and, finally, when it had become hushed altogether, he mused:

"The fight's ended. Somebody has won a victory—somebody has been slain. May the Lord have dealt gently with Highland Harry. He is a grand, noble boy."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLIGHT OF AJAX.

AJAX, the Infant Giant, with his precious burden, the unconscious Kitty Boyne, sped away into the hills, never dreaming of becoming separated from Highland Harry until he suddenly discovered that such was really the case. A feeling of bitter disappointment and regret filled his breast. He stopped and listened. He heard the report of Harry's rifle more than a mile off to the right, and then all hopes of rejoining him soon, if at all, vanished.

Meanwhile Kitty was recovering from her swoon and when she at length was able to speak, the first word she uttered was Harry's name.

She was seated upon the ground supported by the arm of Ajax. Around them it was almost total darkness.

"Harry is not here, Miss Kitty," the young Giant said in a low, kind voice; "but we'll meet him soon I hope. Have no fear."

"Where am I? Who are you? Where is Seguin?—and that dreadful Giant I saw in the cabin?" she asked as the past came back to her confused, distracted mind.

Ajax kindly answered each of her questions in detail, besides giving an account of how they came to be in Teton Basin, and of their adventures therein.

"You and Harry certainly run great risks, Ajax," the maiden said, her mind set at ease by the young Giant's explanations and assurances; "and it was very unfortunate that you became separated. But, oh! how very fortunate for me that you brave young men came into Teton Basin when you did! But, Ajax, how did you find out where I was?"

"We did not know that you were alive at all, Miss Kitty," Ajax replied, "until we had rudely forced ourselves, half-starved, into Seguin's cabin and taken possession of a well-filled table of food which the negress in charge informed us was her master's wedding-supper. Then a little inquiry brought out the fact that you were alive and the bride of Hank Seguin. We had heard that you had been killed by Harry's bullet which slew your captor near Red Bar, so it was a big surprise to us when we found out different."

"No, I was not even wounded by Harry's bullet," the maiden said; "but when my captor fell I think I must have fainted. I remember a cry bursting from the fellow's lips when the ball struck him, and the next thing after that that I became conscious of, was of being in the woods in care of some strange men who claimed they had rescued me from a party of Indians. They carried me off through the mountains telling me that I should be taken home, and in every way treating me with the most considerate kindness. But all the while I mistrusted the character of the men, and when we arrived at their stronghold, and I was confronted by Hank Seguin, I felt satisfied that my abduction had been preconcerted, and that Seguin was at the bottom of it all."

"I became a guest in the house of an outlaw whose wife kept a close watch over me, though I could not have been kindlier treated. Hank Seguin came daily to see me. I always detested him. Many times in our home at Red Bar have I spurned his pretended love, and when I became a prisoner in the outlaws' den he renewed his petitions. Again I refused him, and he gave me to understand he would compel me to marry him, and carried his threat into execution by compelling me to submit to a pretended marriage. The man performing the ceremony claimed to be a priest, but I know he was an outlaw."

"Of course he was, the sacrilegious scoundrel!" Ajax exclaimed, indignantly, his blood stirred by the maiden's story; "and I thank the great Jehovah that we were there in time to prevent further wrongs against you. But I know it would 'a' done your soul good, Miss Kitty, if you could have seen Harry and me sweep that supper-table like a cyclone. We were hungry as bears, and yet, if the wench 'd been white about it when we asked her for something to eat, we wouldn't have raided her table like coyotes; but when she got sassy and

lied to us we walked in on our ear and knocked things like twin famine. I don't know what-all we did have, Miss Kitty; when you see Harry he'll tell you what flip-flaps and jim-cracks we had at your wedding-supper. And what's more, I anticipated our needs and brought along in my pockets some of the weddin'-cake, some cold meats and bread. Whenever you want to sample it, just say so, please."

"I will, thank you," replied Kitty, "but I have no appetite now."

Nerved and strengthened by the hope of escape and the promise of meeting the one she loved, Kitty rose to her feet and announced that she was fully able to travel without further delay, and taking her giant escort's arm, they moved away.

More fortunate than Harry had been was Ajax in keeping his course, and when night had fully set in he was enabled to maintain his bearings by the stars.

Confident of meeting Harry in the pass through which they had entered the Basin, he made extra exertions to reach the defile under cover of darkness. Moreover, he was well-satisfied that the outlaws would endeavor to cut off their retreat by guarding the various passages, and it was therefore highly necessary that he get in ahead of them.

Long before daylight he succeeded in reaching the entrance to the defile, but both he and his fair charge were sorely disappointed in not meeting Highland Harry.

They waited there more than an hour, and as the young rifleman came not, they resumed their flight, knowing it was dangerous to tarry longer.

Shortly after daylight they came to a spring where they rested a few minutes, Ajax sharing the food he had confiscated with Kitty; and when thus rested and refreshed they moved on.

The canyon they were traversing wound and twisted among the hills like a serpent's trail. At times it widened to the dimensions of a little valley with a cheerful light pervading it, then narrowing to a deep, dark and dismal defile.

In and out of these stretches of light and shadows the Giant and maiden passed. The only danger they could now expect was from behind, and with no other thought, so far as danger was concerned, they moved on to suddenly meet with a bitter surprise. In emerging from a point where the canyon was narrow and winding into a little opening they suddenly found themselves confronted by at least a score of Indians.

Kitty uttered a cry of fear and shrunk trembling to the side of her big friend.

At first sight Ajax took the red-skins for friendly Crows, but in a second he saw his mistake—that they were a party of hostile Sioux and Snakes; and what was still more startling, he discovered Kitty's father, Stony Boyne, a captive in their midst.

Starting back as soon as he had discovered his mistake, Ajax would have retreated into the narrow defile had the wily red-skins not anticipated his movement and cut off his retreat.

On catching sight of her father, Kitty uttered a little cry of surprise and pain and started toward him; but a savage rudely pushed her back, and but for the arm of Ajax she would have fallen. Never, however, did that red-skin pay more dearly for an act of rudeness. Instantly the hot blood of the Infant Giant was aroused, and he dealt the savage a blow in the face with his fist that sent him stunned and bleeding to the earth.

But it was certainly a rash act, and the Giant saw it in an instant. A cry of vindictive rage burst from the savages' lips, and a warrior, snatching up a rifle from the ground, leveled it upon the young mountaineer's breast and fired!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TREACHEROUS SHOT.

KITTY BOYNE saw the murderous intent of the red-skin who had leveled his rifle upon Ajax, and, with a presence of mind remarkable for one who had for days been almost crazed with fear and suffering, she threw out her hand and pushed the muzzle of the weapon aside. Nor did she do so the fraction of a moment too soon, for the gun being discharged, the bullet passed between Ajax's arm and body, powder-marks being left upon both his sleeve and the waist of his jacket.

But even as the gun rung out Ajax grasped it by the muzzle, and with a quick movement of his powerful arm, wrenched the weapon from the red-skin's hands, and, with almost the same movement, swung it above his head, and the next instant it had become a whip of iron in a

hand of steel, sweeping down with an irresistible power everything before it.

The red-skins drew both knives and tomahawks and turned upon the giant foe; but every one that dared venture within reach of that merciless club went down like grass before the sickle, some with broken heads, some stunned, and others but slightly injured. Around the Colossus, who was the very personification of incarnate fury, surged and dodged and writhed the yelling, shrieking, demoniac savages. He kept a space about him clear, and unable to reach him with knife or tomahawk in hand, the Indians finally began hurling their weapons at his head.

Directed by an excited brain, and wielded by an unsteady hand, the missiles flew wildly through the air, doing little harm to the brave mountaineer. But this was not to continue so to the end, for finally a flying tomahawk struck him upon the forehead, inflicting a gaping wound, from which the blood poured over his face and into his eyes, almost blinding as well as slightly stunning him for a moment. But it was only for a moment. Before the savages could avail themselves of this slight advantage, the Giant charged upon them like a frenzied madman.

Meanwhile Kitty Boyne stood crouching at one side, her slight form trembling in an agony of fear, and her fair young face blanched with terror.

Bound hand and foot Stony Boyne stood alone and unguarded, writhing and twisting like a fettered panther in a desperate effort to liberate himself.

From the west side of the canyon the mountain rose upward almost to the clouds. Its steep side was devoid of timber, but covered with a dense growth of low bushes, so that its face was unobstructed to the very summit.

Kitty Boyne in her despair—lifting her eyes toward heaven as if to implore the help of God, saw a human figure drop from the clouds, so it seemed, upon this mountain-side, and come flying down the declivity with such lightning speed that his feet scarcely seemed to touch the earth. It seemed impossible to the maiden that any human being could move so swift, and the thought flashed through her distracted brain that the unknown had leaped from the almost perpendicular heights, and was falling like a meteor through space to be crushed in the canyon at her feet.

Down so fast that her burning eyes could scarcely follow it the figure came. She could see it was that of a man, but not until he had landed in the canyon upon his feet unharmed, did she recognize in him the face of Highland Harry, the Wizard Rifleman!

Panting with exertion, his face covered with dust and his clothes almost in tatters, the desperate boy, apparently aware of the situation, hurled himself like a thunderbolt upon the savages, that were pressing hard upon Ajax.

Never did aid come more opportunely. The Infant Giant was upon one knee from a second blow, fighting for his life, although half the savages lay stretched around him dead or dying.

The sudden appearance of Harry from the clouds, as it were, was a surprise the red-skins could not stand before, and as the young mountaineer charged upon them with flashing revolvers they turned and fled in utter dismay.

Staggering to his feet and panting like a worried ox, Ajax glanced at Harry through a mask of blood. A grim smile played about his parted lips. He was so nearly exhausted he could not speak, nor was Highland Harry much better, but he finally managed to say:

"Ajax, you're hurt!"

"Yes," replied the Giant, with a nod of his head, "but we whipped 'em, Harry."

"Oh, Ajax! Ajax!" cried Kitty, running with clasped hands and streaming eyes to the young mountaineer; "you have saved us all!"

"Harry put on the finishing touches, Kitty," the Giant said, clasping his burning head between his palms, and leaning wearily against a rock.

"Harry," said the maiden, "he fought them all—oh! so long before you came! and I am afraid he is badly hurt. Oh, Harry! if you could have been here at first!"

"And if you'd had your senses 'bout you," suddenly broke in Stony Boyne, in a gruff, angry tone, "you might 'a' set me free, and I could 'a' helped a little."

"Oh, my dear father!" pleaded Kitty, "I was so excited—so terrified that I could think of nothing!"

Harry released Boyne, then with Kitty's help dressed Ajax's wounded head the best they

could. This done, the young Giant stretched himself upon the ground, when he and Harry briefly discussed their adventures since parting in Teton Basin. After they had concluded their stories, Kitty gave her father the history of her abduction, the flight of her captors to the Basin, her forced marriage with Hank Seguin, and rescue within an hour after the wedding by Harry and Ajax.

Boyne listened to her story in silence, a dark frown upon his sphinx-like face. He made no remarks in the presence of the mountaineers, but finally leading her aside talked to her in a low tone.

Meanwhile Harry walked away down the defile to see that none of the routed savages were lurking about to shoot them on the sly.

Ajax remained lying upon the ground, his head racked with great pain. Some two or three minutes had passed when his attention was attracted by Kitty's voice, pitched in a high key, protesting against some wish of her father.

"Father," he heard her say, "I have always obeyed your wishes, and never questioned your motives until now. I have kept faithfully all your secrets, and tried to be an obedient daughter. But you know I never liked Seguin—I always despised him and always shall. I will never go back to him, for I know our marriage was a farce and a mockery, and is not binding in sight of God or man!"

"I do not ask you to go back to the outlaws' stronghold, but to go with me," Boyne replied, surlily.

"If you go north toward Red Bar, of course I will go home with you, but if you continue south, as you have said you intended to, I shall refuse to accompany you, for this canyon leads back into Teton Basin, along which outlaws may now be coming in pursuit."

"You need not try to bluff me, Kitty," Boyne said, in a defiant, determined tone, "for you will do as I say—go whichever way I go! Understand that!"

"Mr. Boyne," said Ajax, unable to remain silent longer, "surely you would not force your daughter into danger again?"

"I will certainly do as I please," was the insulting, astonishing reply Boyne growled out.

The blood of the impulsive Ajax was instantly aroused by the man's response, and rising to his feet, he said:

"No, sir, if Kitty does not wish to go with you, you cannot compel her to! By the throne of mercy! Harry and I have labored too hard, and shed too much blood in her behalf, to calmly submit to the loss of all. We do not begrudge what we have done for her—yea! would shed the last drop of blood in our veins for her—"

"Oh, father!—Ajax!" suddenly broke in Kitty, starting up as if in sudden fear, "I hear the sound of galloping hoofs coming up the canyon! We are in danger here! It must be outlaws in pursuit of us!"

True enough, the clatter of hoofs could be distinctly heard coming toward them, and as Ajax again prepared for battle, he said to Kitty:

"Run, girl, and conceal yourself in the pass, and be spared the sight of another conflict."

"May God help you!" said the girl, as, turning from her father, she hastened to comply with Ajax's request; and as she disappeared in the narrow defile, the Giant shouted:

"Ho, Death-Pop! this way, man—quick!"

In making ready to meet the coming horsemen, who he knew must be outlaws, Ajax retreated backward across the little opening to take up a position in the mouth of the defile. As he did so, the stony face of Bill Boyne seemed suddenly changed into that of a maddened demon; and springing forward he snatched up the rifle of a dead savage and discharged it point-blank at the giant mountaineer, who, with a cry of pain, staggered back into the shadows of the defile and fell to the earth!

CHAPTER XIX.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

WHILE the smoke from Stony Boyne's murderous rifle still hung before him, no less than half a dozen horsemen came tearing into the little opening almost riding him down in their hot haste before they discovered his presence.

Quickly, however, the men drew rein at sight of him, and stepping aside, Boyne glanced up at them and, despite the bandaged head and black, swollen face of one of the party he recognized him as his old friend, Henry Seguin.

"Ho, Seguin, old friend!" he exclaimed; "I am rejoiced to see you, even though you are somewhat damaged! I just learned a few min-

utes ago how hard yer luck had been. But you'll git there yit; you're on the right track. Kitty is not far ahead of you; Highland Harry is also up the pass, and so's that big devil, Ajax, but—

"But what in Heaven's name means all this?" asked Seguin, pointing to the bodies of the slain and wounded red-skins before them.

"That's the work of that big hellyon, Ajax!" replied Stony Boyne; then as his face lit up with a smile of fiendish joy he continued: "but it's his last fight. You will ride over his lifeless carcass in the shadows yonder, for I just downed him for good. But hurry on, Seguin, if you would recover your wife. Look sharp for Highland Harry."

"Stand!" suddenly shouted a loud voice from down the defile; "move not or you'll die. Hank Seguin, for be it known that Highland Harry, the Death Pop, has a bead drawn upon your craven heart, while I, Ajax, the Infant Giant, alive and well, have another gent under cover. Oh, no, Mr. Stony Boyne! you did not quite down me, thanks to the stone I stumbled over. We're hungerin' for a fight. Our fingers itch to tickle the triggers of our guns. Move, Hank Seguin and Stony Boyne, one step and rip'll go an ounce bullet through your carcasses!"

"My God!" cried Boyne, "that's the voice of that accursed Giant! He escaped my bullet after all! Do not move, Seguin, or you will be a dead man!"

Concealed in the shadows, with the outlaws in open daylight, the young mountaineers had, indeed, the drop on the foe and full well the latter knew it.

Fairly trembling in their saddles with mortal fear, the outlaws durst not move a muscle. Each one felt that he was the especial target of Highland Harry, the very mention of whose name was sufficient to send a chill through the heart of the average outlaw.

The situation was rather a novel one. Seven men well armed were virtually held motionless by two invisible foes. To Seguin it was dreadfully humiliating, but his recent experience with these same mountaineers in his own cabin, however exasperating it was, was such as to induce him to respect their commands. He had made a quick survey of the situation, and mental calculation of the chances of escape by a bold dash; but the result was not at all promising, for he saw that before they could get their horses in motion half of them could be shot down.

After holding a consultation among themselves, one of the outlaws called out:

"Say, what do you assassins propose to do?" "Shoot you, if you stir," responded Highland Harry.

"Do you intend we'll stand here till we take root?" again asked the freebooter.

"Oh, no," answered Ajax; "we jist want to try your patience; besides, we would rather kill you if you give us an excuse. There's Pap Boyne, who acted like an old fool awhile ago, that we count as one of your gang for shootin' purposes if he goes to chimpanzein' around the least bit. I've stood all his tom-foolery I'm goin' to. But, say, Seguin, how did your weddin' go off? I know some o' the supper went off with Highland Harry and yours truly;—fine cook, that wench of yours, Seg. Reckon you're off on your weddin' tour, ar'n't you? Queer customs in this country. Back in old Maine, where I was born and educated, the groom tears 'round with his bride a month or so. Ugly mug that you carry, Seg.; married life bruises and breaks you all up, don't it? But such are the incidents of life that makes this old world half a fraud."

To the outlaws Ajax's words were terribly provoking, and it was all some of them could do to keep quiet. The Giant did not seem to be more than thirty or forty paces from them, and they endeavored to locate his exact position by the sound of his voice. But in this they failed, owing to the shadows that concealed the big foe, and so they were compelled to face the distracting music.

The cornered villains conversed among themselves in an undertone, each one racking his brain for some expedient by which they might escape from danger and their humiliating position. But what seemed possible to one was rejected by the others.

Finally one reckless fellow resolved to make a break, anyhow, upon his own motion, and quick as a flash threw himself from his saddle and darted away toward the defile through which they had entered the opening. But quick as he was, Highland Harry was quicker—his rifle rung out and the fugitive fell dead.

The result of the outlaw's attempt to escape

was a frightful warning to his friends, and when the dead man's horse, relieved of its rider's restraining hand, walked leisurely off to one side, making the other animals somewhat restless, a general panic was threatened. The spirited horse of Seguin began pawing the ground in a restless, impatient manner that made it very uncomfortable for the man whose life depended on his keeping his horse quiet as well as himself.

After holding the outlaws this way ten or fifteen minutes, the young mountaineers decided upon another course, and Ajax yelled out:

"Say, you fellers, we've decided to have a change in the situation, and you'll be ready to promptly respond."

Before the change decided upon could be announced, the ears of the mountaineers caught the sound of footsteps creeping stealthily up behind them!

CHAPTER XX.

PROFESSOR SIMON PLUNKETT ACCUSED OF MURDER.

PROFESSOR PLUNKETT watched Highland Harry in breathless suspense until the fearless youth had disappeared from sight adown the mountain, then he moved on along the brow of the heights with a quickened footstep. He crossed the ridge and descended into a densely wooded valley toward the north, and was walking briskly along through the timber when his ears were suddenly greeted by a sharp, stern voice commanding:

"Halt there, old sinner! and throw up!"

Quick as a flash the professor stopped, and throwing up his hands piped out:

"There! don't shoot! come forth!"

Out from a thicket came two men dressed in the garb of mountaineers, their grizzled faces broad with a smile.

They were Spokane Joe and Uncle Bildad.

At sight of them the professor shouted:

"I am Simon Plunkett, an inoffensive entomologist—who are you?"

The old bordermen came up and introduced themselves, and then began plying Plunkett with questions in a tone that reflected some doubt of his reputed character.

"Here, gentlemen," said the professor perceiving their distrust, "let me show you some of my specimens and be convinced of what I tell you."

He handed Uncle Bildad a bottle containing two or three bugs. The old man looked at the bottle, then producing a similar one from his own pocket compared the two, saying:

"Dog my cats! if they ain't jist alike even to the label onto them!"

"Yoop! glory!" exclaimed Plunkett at sight of Bildad's bottle; "the lost is found! That's mine, gents, for which I've been hunting these weeks!"

"Yours? humph! we found it in the crevices o' a rock whar my chum, Spokane Joe, declared it was deposited during the Glacial Epoch. The paper in it has writin' on it which Spokane says is the writin' of a prehistoric age."

"You're a luscious pair of antiquarians, you are," retorted Plunkett; "the writing on the paper in that bottle is my own, done less than two years ago. It is the dying confession of one Ruth Grimm and is witnessed by Henry Seguin and yours truly, Simon Plunkett. See if I am not correct."

"Stranger, we've examined it," replied Uncle Bildad, "and guess it's yours. Them three names are on the paper, which, as you say, seems to be a dying statement. Here, take your property!"

A smile of exceeding great joy passed over Plunkett's face as he received the bottle to which he addressed an apostrophe in eloquent tones.

After a few minutes' further conversation Spokane Joe said:

"Perfesser, we've got to be goin'; we heard the sound o' a conflict over in the big canyon and are headed that way. We've friends in these varminty hills—"

"Highland Harry one of them?" asked Plunkett.

"To be sure he is; have you seen him?"

"Left me less than half an hour ago—jumped off the mountain-top to take a hand in that fight. It seems to me you fellers are scattered like a flushed covey of quails. In unity there's strength—united we stand, divided we fall, and if you fellows have no objections I'll unite my forces with you and—"

"Come right along, perfesser," interrupted Spokane Joe.

The three moved off down the valley, which grew narrower and deeper as they advanced

until it became a canyon. They were but a few rods from the big canyon into which the one they were following opened, when they suddenly came face to face with Kitty Boyne.

At sight of her, Uncle Bildad was almost dumfounded.

"My Lord!" he exclaimed, "is this Kitty Boyne? and alone?"

"Oh, Uncle Bildad!" the maiden exclaimed, joyfully, "I am so glad to meet you!"

"So'm I you, Kitty; but, for goodness' sakes! what are you doin' here alone, child?"

"Highland Harry sent me into this defile while he hastened to help Ajax fight a pursuing party of outlaws."

"Kitty Boyne did I understand you to call this little lady?" asked Prof. Plunkett.

"Yes," answered Uncle Bildad; "Kitty, this is Professor Simon Plunkett—scientific bug-hunter."

Bowing politely to the maiden, the professor asked:

"Kitty, didn't you used to be called Theresa Grimm?"

The maiden started back, and as she fixed her eyes upon Plunkett her face grew ashen pale.

"Why do you ask that?" she finally demanded; "what is it to you what I used to be called?"

"Then you have never heard of the naturalist, Simon Plunkett, that two years ago—"

"Ah!" cried Kitty, as some terrible thought seemed to have entered her mind, "you are the murderer!—the man that killed my mother in cold blood!"

Simon Plunkett was a man of nerve, and he met the maiden's accusation with unflinching calmness.

"That's something I had not expected," he said. "You have no doubt, Miss Kitty, been made to believe that I killed your mother; but whoever told you so lied like a piping devil!"

"Henry Seguin and my father told me so," Kitty exclaimed.

"Well, they both lied like the villains they are," Plunkett declared. "Your mother shot herself accidentally, and soon after I happened along at the cabin. She was alone and dying, and wished to make a death-bed statement in justice to you, Kitty. I wrote down her words, and, thank the Lord, I have them in this bottle, right here. While writing her statement Henry Seguin came to the cabin. He heard the whole story, and signed this paper as a witness. I left Seguin at the cabin and went away, having promised to deliver the paper to one David Raymond. I never dreamed of danger until a man popped up before me in the mountains, hours afterward, and demanded Mrs. Grimm's confession. I popped him over and ran. A second fellow shot at me and came very near my mark. That fellow was Henry Seguin. The other I mistrusted was Grimm. They pursued me for over a hundred miles, and for fear they might get hold of the paper I concealed it in the crevice of a rock. For two months I've been trying to find it, and only a few minutes ago received it from the hands of these gentlemen. I know Grimm and Seguin had plotted some conspiracy against you, for be it known, Kitty, that man Grimm, alias Bill Boyne, is not your father."

"What! William Boyne not my father!" cried Kitty.

"No, ma'am," replied Plunkett; "listen to this confession of your mother, Kitty."

He read the paper over to her. The girl was astounded.

"Then Mrs. Grimm was not my mother, either!" she cried.

"No, ma'am," responded the professor; "you seem to have been sinned against from your birth, Kitty."

"And when is it to end?" the maiden asked, an expression of pain passing over her face. "But there is one thing I am truly glad to learn, and that is that Stony Boyne is not my father. He is now near by, in yonder canyon, and less than an hour ago he declared I should be Henry Seguin's wife. For over two years I have persistently refused to recognize Seguin even as a friend. I loathe him, and yet my father—Stony Boyne—has always been a warm friend of his. His conduct toward me to-day, as well as the past years, proves that he has no fatherly feeling for me. Since my mother's death I mistrusted that he was engaged in some scheme or other, for he at once moved to Red Bar and changed his name to Grimm. I changing my name also, by his request. He represented to me that his object was to conceal his identity and hunt down mother's murderer. He has claimed for several years to be a detective, and I supposed he was, never once dreaming that he was in collusion with the outlaws."

Highland Harry, the Wizard Rifleman.

At this juncture the baying of a hound suddenly fell upon the ears of the party, and reminded Simon Plunkett of Highland Harry's adventure with the outlaws and bloodhounds. Satisfied that the deceived and enraged robbers were upon his own trail, directed by the hound, the old professor advised a forward movement, and acting upon his advice, the three, accompanied by Kitty, hurried on and soon entered the canyon in which the maiden had left Harry.

Just then their ears were greeted by the report of a rifle a short ways down the defile.

"That's Highland Harry's gun!" declared Uncle Bildad. "I'd know its boom in Pandemonium. Let us move in that direction."

To this all assented and they moved away. They had journeyed less than half a mile when they came in sight of Highland Harry and Ajax perched upon a projecting rock at the side of the defile, their rifles resting upon a rocky breastwork before them, and covering the heart of Hank Seguin and Stony Boyne!

CHAPTER XXI.

RETRIBUTION.

HIGHLAND HARRY and Ajax started with sudden fear at the sound of the footsteps behind them, and with the impression that savages were stealing upon them, they quickly glanced back over their shoulders to be most happily surprised in seeing Spokane Joe, the hunter, coming toward them.

Creeping up to Harry's side Old Joe soon learned the situation, and then informed the mountaineer that Uncle Bildad, Kitty Boyne and Simon Plunkett were waiting his return in the defile below.

"I'm glad you came, Joe," Harry said, "and to hear that Plunkett is safe. There's five outlaws over north of here with a bloodhound, and I have been afraid they might drift this way and give us trouble."

"We heard the bayin' o' their dog less'n half an hour ago, Harry," answered Joe.

"Indeed?" exclaimed Harry; "then you hurry back, Joe, and send Plunkett here, and you and Uncle Bildad guard the pass below, and we'll bring matters to a close-up here pretty quick now."

Old Spokane hurried back to his friends, and Plunkett soon appeared upon the scene, and chucking Harry in the ribs in high glee, peered over the breastwork at the outlaws, coolly observing:

"They're standing there quiet as the equestrian statues of General Jackson, ar'n't they?"

"Never saw a more docile crew," answered Highland Harry; "we'd hoped they'd do something to provoke us to shoot, but they seem determined to freeze us out. However, we're going to change things. Ajax, give your orders."

"Attention, outlaws!" shouted the Infant; "you'll now unbuckle your pistol-belts and hang them on the horns of your saddles and then dismount, advance in front of your steeds and form in line, when we'll send a man to interview you, for be it remembered that within the past ten minutes our forces have been increased by such men as Old Spokane Joe, Uncle Bildad Durr, and another distinguished gentleman. Unbuckle, dismount and fall into line!"

The outlaws quietly obeyed the Giant's command, and as they fell into line Simon Plunkett facetiously observed:

"They toe the chalk-line like the big class in geography in a country school, don't they? Wonder if you couldn't put them through the manual of arms—drill them—"

"With lead," interrupted Harry; "but now, Plunkett, we want to take that man Seguin and Stony Boyne prisoners, and some one of us must go into that opening and bind them hand and foot while the others hold them under leveled rifles."

"I'm the man to put on the fetters," said Plunkett; "I'll take the ropes off their own saddles, and if they go to showing fight—"

"We'll shoot them down!" said Harry.

Plunkett slipped down into the defile and advanced into the presence of the outlaws, bowing with mock politeness, and saying:

"Gents, Simon Plunkett, entomologist of the Brownsonian Institute. Perhaps you, Henry Seguin, remember me as having taken down the dying statement of one Mrs. Grimm, some two years ago, up on the Yellowstone? Since then I've been doing some detective work. I found Mr. Grimm had skipped the land of the Yellowstone and become Stony Boyne of the Puritanical settlement of Red Bar. Gentlemen, I am here to place you in bonds."

Involuntarily Henry Seguin dropped his hand to his side, forgetting his revolver was not

there, and that he was covered by the deadly Winchester of the Wizard Rifleman. His disappointment and chagrin found expression in a violent oath that reached the ears of Ajax, who quickly bawled out:

"Mr. Seguin, you'll step forward and quietly submit to be bound or take the consequences."

Seguin advanced as commanded, but as he did so the ears of all were greeted by the deep baying of a dog down the pass, followed by the crack of a rifle, the shouts of men, the yells of savages—all of which became mingled in the murderous crash of firearms.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.

THE sound of battle bursting so suddenly upon the ears of Highland Harry and his friends filled their breasts with a dreadful fear, and for a moment fairly paralyzing their senses. That their friends, Spokane Joe and Uncle Bildad, were engaged with an overwhelming number of savages and outlaws there was no doubt; and thus in a moment had the situation become critical.

On the other hand Henry Seguin and his friends took courage, for the sound of the conflict signaled the presence of friends, and the outlaw leader was not slow to take advantage of the alarm. With eyes seeming to burst into flame, he sprang at Plunkett like a tiger and seizing the naturalist about the waist in the grip of a bear, and holding him thus, began hastily walking backward with a view of escaping into the canyon, his body covered from bullets by that of Plunkett.

It was a desperate expedient of a desperate man, and his movements threw his friends into a panic, and breaking ranks they made a bold dash for life and liberty. But as one the guns of the mountaineers rung out, and both Boyne and Seguin fell, Simon Plunkett going down with his captor.

"By mercy, Highland!" cried Ajax, "I'm afraid you have killed the professor!"

"It was only the top of Seguin's head I had to draw on," replied Harry leaping down into the canyon; "but come, Ajax, our friends below are in trouble."

Without stopping to learn the fate of Plunkett the two young men dashed down the canyon.

They had gone but a short way when they met Kitty Boyne wild with terror. From her they learned that several men under Captain Dalton from Red Bar had joined Uncle Bildad and Spokane down the canyon, and before they had time to exchange greetings, a party of outlaws and savages had burst from a side canyon and attacked them.

By this time the sound of battle was receding into the hills, which gave Harry and Ajax hope that their friends had beaten back the foe. To make sure they hastened on, having directed the terrified Kitty to conceal herself in a dark pocket in the side of the canyon near where they left her.

Forty rods further on the lifeless body of a dog told them where the fight had begun. A few rods beyond this they came upon half a dozen prostrate forms of dead and wounded men. Among them were three savages. Of the white men the mountaineers were horrified to find one of them a settler of Red Bar. Still further on lay the lifeless form of the redoubtable Bruiser Bill; and near him reclined Captain Kit Dalton seriously wounded.

"My Lord! captain, what does this mean?" exclaimed Highland Harry.

"We've a hard struggle of it, Harry," the captain responded, his face drawn and pinched with pain; "but our friends routed the foe and are pursuing them into the hills."

By this time the sound of the conflict had ended, and so Harry and Ajax went no further, but bidding Captain Dalton be of good cheer they turned and hurried back to Kitty.

Finding her safe they proceeded on into the little opening to look after Plunkett. To their happy surprise they found him unharmed seated by the side of Stony Boyne who lay prone upon the earth, his head resting upon the body of a dead savage. He was still living though the pallor of death was gathering upon his face.

Hank Seguin lay where he had fallen stone dead, with the top of his head blown off by the Wizard Rifleman's bullet.

Stony Boyne inquired for Kitty as soon as Harry approached, and in answer to his inquiry the half-terrified girl came up saying:

"Here, father, I am. Oh, you are dying!"

"Yes, they killed me, Kitty, but it's no use to complain now. Perhaps I deserved it all. I was doing wrong—plotting 'g'inst you. Kitty, you are not my child!"

"I learned so to-day," Kitty replied, weeping bitterly.

"No, you are not my daughter," Boyne repeated, "but the daughter of one David Raymond, who arrived in Red Bar the evening of your abduction. But your dying confession in the hands of that man will explain all to you."

"But why have you and Seguin always told me that mother was murdered by Simon Plunkett?" Kitty asked.

"Seguin and I conspired to obtain David Raymond's wealth. By putting the blame of her death on Plunkett as an excuse for killin' him, and gettin' possession of the confession, then marrying you to Seguin by fair or foul means, we intended to establish your claim upon Millionaire Raymond by having some one else, instead of Plunkett, present the confession of Mrs. Grimm to that gentleman. Of course, if Raymond accepted Kitty as his daughter, he must accept her husband as a son, and after we had got that far, further plans were to be made that I might have a share of Raymond's wealth."

"Plunkett, however, escaped, and finding Raymond, put him on the track of his child. To elude him I fled to Red Bar, changin' our names, and have succeeded in keepin' out of his way until recently. My object in this hiding was in the hope that Seguin might win your affections in an honorable way, so far as you were concerned—but for the dishonorable purpose of robbin' your true father. But your persistent dislike of him, Kitty, has brought about the result that Seguin is dead and I nearly so. I hope now that you may be restored to your own father; and I shall die in the hopes of your forgiveness."

Kitty was deeply grieved and remained by Boyne's side until he died. As soon as Simon Plunkett announced his death she arose and walked away, weeping bitterly. Harry approached her and in low tones spoke the kindest words of cheer and comfort to her—words that strengthened her, for, of all others, Highland Harry was her idol—in him had she long since centered all her hopes of future happiness.

While the party still tarried in the little opening Uncle Bildad came tearing up the canyon, wild with joy over their victories. He was accompanied by David Raymond, and when they entered the presence of Kitty the old man shouted:

"Here she is, David, sound and well, God bless her! Kitty—gal, this grand old gentleman is your own blessed father, David Raymond!"

Kitty lifted her streaming eyes to those of the tall, handsome stranger; her lips quivered, her brain grew dizzy, she reeled and would have fallen had David Raymond not caught her in his strong arms, murmuring as he did so:

"Yes, it is my child! my child—the image of her dear, dead mother!" and bending his head he kissed the brow of the motionless girl again and again, while tears of joy streamed down his bearded face.

The victory over the outlaws and savages was not a bloodless one for the people of Red Bar; for, besides the death of two of Captain Dalton's party, the captain himself, Judge Kinny and one other, were severely wounded in the fight, and suffered much misery and pain in their homeward march. But, aside from these no further troubles befell the party, and it was with tears for the dead, and shouts of joy for the living, that they were finally received back by their friends at Red Bar.

In David Raymond Kitty found an ideal father, and she soon came to regard him with all the love and respect that the most hopeful heart could wish for. But when Mr. Raymond talked of departing from Red Bar with his daughter, he found that Highland Harry had a claim upon her young heart that was not to be overlooked. However, a compromise was effected, quite satisfactory to all three; and when Mr. Raymond and his daughter left the Gallatin it was with the understanding that Harry should, at some future time, become a member of his family.

Highland Harry and Ajax, the Infant Giant, continued their warfare against the outlaws of Teton Basin, and to their skill as mountaineers, more than any others, are the people of Northern Montana indebted for the crippling of that notorious band of cut-throats, and the final capture, at Boulder City of Jack Hart himself. Ajax, in particular, distinguished himself as an outlaw and renegade-Indian-fighter in many a sanguinary hand-to-hand struggle, and of him and his deeds we may hear again.

THE END.

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